


Ex libris
UNIVERSITATIS
ALBERTAENSIS





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
University of Alberta Library

<https://archive.org/details/0162001294105>

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: BENZI ZHANG

TITLE OF THESIS: PARADOX OF CHINESE BOXES: NARRATIVE
REFLEXIVITY IN POSTMODERN FICTION

DEGREE: Ph.D.

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1992

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in thesis, and except as hereinbefore provided neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

Every exit is an entry somewhere else.

Tom Stoppard

The Tao that can be told is not the absolute Tao; the names that can be given are not absolute names.

Lao Tzu

There are no interpretations but only misinterpretations.

Harold Bloom

All modern thought is permeated by the idea of thinking the unthinkable.

Michel Foucault

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

PARADOX OF CHINESE BOXES:
NARRATIVE REFLEXIVITY IN POSTMODERN FICTION



BY
BENZI ZHANG

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE
STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall, 1992

To Yuwei

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Paradox of Chinese Boxes: Narrative Reflexivity in Postmodern Fiction" submitted by Benzi Zhang in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

ABSTRACT

This study explores some theoretical significances and ideological implications of the basic forms of the Chinese box strategy in postmodern fiction. The Chinese box strategy assembles a set of texts in a relation both of discontinuity and of continuity, and requires the reader to perform successive acts of resignification and recontextualization of previously established meanings. Through the interplay of multiple texts which attempt to explain one another, the Chinese box strategy de(con)structs the "reality" of each individual text. The result is a radical decentring of perspective that prevents any given contextualization of interpretive privilege. In this sense, the Chinese box strategy evokes a form of narrative democratization or textual heterarchy.

In its radical multiplication of centres of power and in its dissolution of every kind of totalization, textual heterarchy subverts the unitary discourse and announces shattered discourses that are paradoxically hinged by their complicity with a sense of cultural-historical inclusiveness, a kind of ventriloquism of non-totalizable history or reality. Narrative reflexivity, directed at the mechanics and assumptions of composing, interpreting, structuring, and positing, ultimately calls attention to an extra dimension of the narrative act that alerts the reader to the cultural-

historical implications of the Chinese box strategy being performed.

Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook (1962), John Barth's Lost in the Funhouse (1968), and D. M. Thomas's The White Hotel (1981) are chosen to illustrate this study's theoretical perspective for two reasons. First, in all of these works the Chinese box strategy implicates the thematic meanings of these fictions deeply in the structural process of the texts; second, these novelists put the narrative in a critical perspective by presenting textual configurations in a self-conscious mode. Therefore, all these novels will yield a rich perspective on the novelists' self-conscious use of the Chinese box strategy to revise and to resignify their narrative acts within a reflexive discourse; and they will serve as a pretext for speculation about what postmodern Chinese box fiction is theoretically as well as practically.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank my supervisor, Dr. Nora Stovel, for her unsurpassable guidance and kindly encouragement, for her unfailing faith and enthusiastic support, for her inexhaustible knowledge and unstinted intellectual generosity, and for her sage advice at the various stages of my studies.

I thank Dr. Robert R. Wilson for his immeasurable wisdom and maieutic pedagogy, for his erudite commentary and aphoristic instruction, and for his invaluable suggestions and constructive counsel on literary theories.

I thank Dr. Fred Radford for his profound insight and meticulous intelligence, and for his thoughtful patience and stylistic and editorial help during the many metamorphoses of this dissertation.

I thank Dr. Jonathan Hart for his exuberant and supportive friendship, and for his stimulating questions, inspiring observations and knowledgeable advice

I thank Dr. Milan Dimić for bringing his multilingual expertise and the perspective of comparative literature to his reading and examination of my dissertation.

I thank my external examiner, Dr. Ross Chambers, Marvin Felheim Distinguished University Professor of the University of Michigan, for his penetrating and illuminating commentary, and for his insightful and detailed suggestions regarding the transformation of the dissertation into a book.

I thank Dr. Juliet McMaster for accepting me to the excellent doctoral programme at the University of Alberta, and for chairing both my candidacy examination and the defence.

I thank Dr. Edward Bishop for reading portions of the manuscript and for drawing to my attention some important books.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
INTRODUCTION: Paradox of Chinese Boxes: Narrative Reflexivity in Postmodern Fiction . . .	1
CHAPTER ONE: <u>The Golden Notebook</u> : Doris Lessing's Chinese Box	44
CHAPTER TWO: <u>Lost in the Funhouse</u> : John Barth's Chinese Box	99
CHAPTER THREE: <u>The White Hotel</u> : D. M. Thomas's Chinese Box	162
CHAPTER FOUR: The Chinese Box in Reflexion: A Theoretical Review	228
CONCLUSION: The Paradox of the Chinese Box: This Reflexive Miracle	260
NOTES	271
BIBLIOGRAPHY	296

INTRODUCTION

Paradox of Chinese Boxes: Narrative Reflexivity in Postmodern Fiction

I

The consequence of all these disquieting puzzles and paradoxes is to foreground the ontological dimensions of the Chinese box of fiction.

Brian McHale

Postmodernist Fiction¹

Paradoxes, in general, can delight or trouble. Depending on temperamental make-up, we shall be either seduced by their frustrating teasing or upset with their frustrating lack of resolution.

Linda Hutcheon

A Poetics of Postmodernism²

This study will explore some theoretical significances and ideological implications of the basic forms of the Chinese box strategy in postmodern fiction. Since in many postmodern

texts, the Chinese box strategy is often combined with exploration of some other important conventions and issues of literature, such as reflexivity, fragmentation, self-reference, and history, the right approach therefore should be a compound investigation of the significances of the Chinese box strategy, which usually surface in relation to other issues and conventions of postmodern fiction. Accustomed as we may have become to some existing theories of narrative boxes, we have yet to redefine our concept of the Chinese box strategy, since critical terms and theoretical concepts are usually loaded with preconceptions that hinder our task of seeing clearly what the Chinese box strategy has accomplished in postmodern fiction. Usually when we hear of the Chinese box narrative, we think of works either like The Thousand and One Nights that comprise a series of inner stories or like Heart of Darkness that explicitly contain a narrative frame. But we know that the Chinese box strategy means much more in the era of postmodernism. As Brian McHale observes, it is used more often as a metaphor for a quality or trait of narrative than as a formal description of structure. Several of the points that I will make about the postmodern Chinese box strategy require this change in our sense of the figure within the term, because to confine the Chinese box strategy to "frame

narratives" or "stories within a story" will risk circumscribing the notion to only a number of relatively conventional examples.

It is worth noting that the postmodern practice of the Chinese box strategy readily exceeds the traditional limits of the frame narrative or the story within a story. It seems that postmodern fictions employ the Chinese box strategy both as a convention to be manipulated and as a new tool to be exploited. Deprived of the usual narrative focus, postmodern fictions are frequently informed by systems of interrelated textual boxes that do not contribute to a coherent and generalized narrative development, but rather break the narrative continuity, standing out against one another before blending into a contextual patterning. In its most ambitious form, the postmodern practice reshapes, reconfigures and reanimates what may be called the Chinese box strategy. The added dimensions demonstrate several previously unnoticed features, which emerge from the expanded field of discourse available only to the postmodern era. An increasing number of postmodern fictions, which we may well call postmodern Chinese box fictions, displace conventional questions of plot, characterization, setting, and point of view with new questions of configuration, organization, trans-relation,

narrative tension, textual interplay, and discursive performance. They may involve what Mikhail Bakhtin calls carnival mode, novelistic dialogism, heteroglossia and stratification, but some other characteristics are also becoming noticeable.

The Chinese box strategy seems to be a new configuration within conventional narrative structures, since it is more than a framing device or a story within a story technique: it takes on some features from both while belonging to neither. The Chinese box strategy, as defined by this study, contributes to the visibility of postmodern fiction's textual heterarchy--a complex and obtrusive narrative configuration--a sort of co-optative juxtaposition or fabrication of the spatial planes, which assembles a set of narratives in a relation both of discontinuity and of continuity so that the reader is required to perform successive acts of resignification and recontextualization of previously established meanings. In this sense, the Chinese box strategy evokes a form of narrative democratization or absence of hierarchy. The result is a radical decentring of perspective that prevents any given contextualization of interpretive privilege. In its radical multiplication of centres of power and in its dissolution of every kind of totalization, textual

heterarchy subverts the unitary discourse and annunciates shattered discourses that are paradoxically hinged by their complicity with a spatializing procedure of narrative acts. The paradox of the postmodern Chinese box strategy is that it always contributes a dynamism, an interacting play or trans-relation of inner textual boxes, while it may also contribute textual density that appears to be immobile. In some works it may show the vision of order by establishing a hierarchy that the narrative configuration itself may reject; sometimes it can undermine the text's authority, introducing a heterarchical disarray and inducing the reader to abandon the passive role in order to (re)establish a new meaningful or orderly association. So in chaotic works there is a tendency to use this strategy to unify and even harmonize disparate elements by creating a dynamic of difference, while in some harmonious works the strategy may be used to break coherence with radical disarrangement.

I thus wish to consider the Chinese box strategy in a more general sense as an emphatic expression of the paradox of postmodern fiction. Of course, the use of the Chinese box strategy to spatialize the text certainly evokes a sense of variegation and complication in postmodern discourses; but, to the crowded, chaotic field of complicating discourses, the

Chinese box strategy also co-optates a level of orchestration, providing meaningful interactions, trans-relations, cooperations and associations amongst various inner textual boxes, which might otherwise lost in narrative entanglement. Sometimes it serves to foreground a work's configuration, itself a function of the arrangement of inner textual boxes; however, by marking textual gaps and enforcing narrative leaps, the Chinese box strategy also helps make postmodern fiction's discontinuity more challenging and slow up progress or regress. Furthermore, by facilitating diversity, it contributes to the combinative impact of a Chinese box work, turning structure into the prime adventure and making narrative configuration one of the principal sources of interest; and by making unexpected juxtapositions, it also enlarges the space between the surface and depth of the postmodern text and, as a result, shakes the reader out of complacent habits of apprehension. So while rejecting conventional narrative structures, postmodern Chinese box fiction generally accepts responsibility for the new freedoms and qualities it generates. These new qualities, however, do not rule out the tension between the new freedoms and the conventions they subvert. To a greater or lesser degree, all Chinese box fictions play with narrative conventions. This

play, however, generally has the spirit of reflexivity, tending toward a parodic effect, an invention upon an old exhausted literary form with the intent of producing invigorating innovation. Although they may be considered as over-intricate by some readers, most postmodern Chinese box fictions do have the best of both convention and invention.

Thus, my discussion of the paradoxical Chinese box strategy is meant to step out of an ancient vicissitudinous convention laden with unnecessary critical, epistemological, and metaphysical assumptions. If we consider traditional theories and current poetics of the Chinese box works, we can see several of the false starts critics have made toward (mis)understanding its implications in postmodern fiction, which usually depend upon a metaphysical assumption of the possibility of distinction between hierarchic levels or frames. Actually, in most cases of postmodern Chinese box fiction, it is extremely difficult to distinguish the individual textual levels or boxes, because, as Patricia Waugh observes, the borderlines between the various narrative levels and boxes, between frame and the enframed, and between the story and the story in a story, are often bleared.³ In such works, the Chinese box strategy draws on a radical blurring of the borders or levels of narratives and texts. Often the

levels are deliberately transgressed, either as a parodic reflection on old narrative decorum or as a manifestation of a new heterarchical configuration. So, another paradox of the postmodern Chinese box strategy is that it continually and pointedly deconstructs and undercuts its own multi-level systems against the grain of the traditional operations.

Perhaps the most pervasive and common use of the Chinese box strategy in postmodern fiction is to juxtapose inner texts. Simply stated, what I am calling juxtaposition is a narrative heterarchy that creates structures without intratextual subordination. Conventional novels and even many that are unconventional always adhere to the principle of hierarchy, stressing proper subordination, imposing not only regularity, but also an orderly arrangement of materials on all levels of their discourse. But postmodern Chinese box fictions often violate this dominant narrative decorum with radical heterarchical juxtapositions. Indeed, only in the era of postmodernism does fiction start to avail itself of heterarchy, juxtaposition, trans-relation, multilinked interaction and textual discord to complicate its structure, enliven its narrative, and accentuate its interactive meaning. Paradoxically, however, through its heterarchical form, the Chinese box strategy is also the most powerful ordering

device, because it can facilitate the conjunction of radically different materials and lend itself to the generation of works, frequently in a mock-encyclopedic vein or mock-museum form or mock-library arrangement, which develop a strategy of confrontational cooperation.

Since it is basically an interactive procedure or organization, the Chinese box strategy presupposes the suppression or radical diffusion of plot and character and the deemphasis of objects, actions, and situations. Texts organized by the Chinese box strategy often cope with self-imposed deprivation or a radical liberation from narrative constraints by elaborating heterarchical configurations, hypertextual permutations, interfacing narratives, collage sequences, to which the reader does not have immediate recourse in the quest to impose a system of coherence. We may of course find these procedures in almost any postmodern text, but the most elaborate dramatizations of them are to be found in the Chinese box fiction. Such structures and procedures may be in some measure consciously elaborated--as demonstrated by Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook (1962), John Barth's Lost in the Funhouse (1968), and D. M. Thomas's The White Hotel (1981). In short, postmodern Chinese box fiction can be considered as a paradoxical printed hypertext⁴ that

foregrounds its labyrinthine intricacy, while calling upon the reader to find and even produce a rationale.

Several features of the postmodern Chinese box strategy are, therefore, particularly noteworthy. The first is the tendency to present simultaneously, if not always schematically, all sides of a given object such as world, self and mind, and to break the object into components that can be neither conjoined smoothly nor considered as separate entities from the reader's perspective. The result is a co-optative tension between coherence and fragmentation, and between parallax and simultaneity. By obliging the reader to consider such trans-related fragments as both disjunct and conjunct, the Chinese box strategy installs a new internal multilink system in the narrative. That is, the reader will experience the text as a concatenation of narratives and also as a spatial unit, a narrative dialectic or interaction. The temporal and spatial component of the process of experiencing a text is thus confused and greatly amplified. In such texts as The White Hotel, the Chinese box strategy breaks down the fictional world into several interlaced inner narratives from which objects in a spatial field emerge and reverberate. These fictions also incorporate a process of gradual freeing of narrative from the generic limitations, leading to a full

sense of the Chinese box strategy as trans-generic carrier. When such freedom is sufficient enough, these Chinese box novels may represent a generic self-denial: they may be regarded as "novels" only in a new and postmodern sense of this term.

We may see in the question of self-denial a further manifestation of the creative uncertainty and self-distrust implicit in the procedures and products of writers as different as John Barth and Doris Lessing. By questioning and even denying the value of reproducible "reality," which is supposed to be the foundation of the novel, in an era accustomed to all manners of fictitious "realities," they declare the independence of their art from the validity of representation. Paradoxically but appropriately, they generally do so in terms of over-presentation of raw details, a sort of literary hyperrealism. By using the Chinese box strategy, these novels facilitate a sense of freedom. When text is freed from theological control and motifs, what is present is a relatively unmediated raw materials and uncooked truth which usually have strong impact on readers. In an important sense, such texts as The Golden Notebook and The White Hotel share a flexible structure of literary reverie, for, without resorting to the rigid construction of

rationalism, they bring into play unmediated acts and images embedded in the irrational and paradoxical heterarchical configuration that connects the text to the psychic immediacy of the reader.

My next point, therefore, is that the Chinese box strategy supplies the necessary spatial system for plotless or relatively plotless reverie structures. I am speaking, of course, of texts that ground their larger formal coherence on the availability of interactions and trans-relations generated by the signifying systems embedded in or radiating from a heterarchical configuration. Such systems cannot and need not be apprehended in their entirety. Their expansion, after all, contributes to the effect of infinity derived from the awareness that there will always be further levels, worlds, and other spaces. We need not be surprised that the Chinese box strategy, expanding the space of signification, may have a stronger, more immediate, more reassuring, and in some sense a longer-lasting impact than many other devices used in fiction. Anti- or non-narrative works that are predicated on the persistence of radical narrative discontinuity, often become readable by virtue of the Chinese box strategy, whose basis is reading navigation. The more complex the novel, and the richer its content, the more elaborate, necessary, and

visible the function of navigation of the Chinese box strategy becomes.

Postmodern Chinese box fiction, therefore, requires us to change our concepts of fictional elements such as action, plot, and linearity. A widespread conception of narrative plot, inspired by Russian formalists' definition of "fabula,"⁵ is that it consists of a linear sequence of events, determined by what happened "in effect" in the world referred to by the text. The most inclusive position from contemporary theory would accept the basic postulate of narratology, which holds that all "stories"--narratologists' term for "fabula"--can be told in any number of narrative media, as Seymour Chatman puts it, that the "transposability of story is the strongest reason for arguing that narratives are indeed structures independent of any medium."⁶ But in postmodern Chinese box fiction, it is difficult and almost impossible to separate "fabula" from "discourse" without distortion; in other words, in an era when "medium becomes message," narratives can no longer be said to be totally independent of any medium. Far from being limited to what objectively happened, narrative boxes can be narratives of possible stories or worlds, some actual and some virtual, some "told" and some "untold";⁷ since narrative universes are not only composed of a physical world, a realm

of factual events, but also inhabited by human beings, whose minds may create numerous immaterial worlds, such as dreams, fantasies, memories, wishes, and imaginations, which make digressive and non-sequential movements obvious. In The White Hotel, for instance, the main stories only exist in the characters' minds, and none of them can be regarded as fabula. Since the representation is contained in each character's mind, the fictional world consists of different embedded mental narratives, which include "imagined" spaces, "untold" worlds,⁸ fantasized events, and dreamed actions. It is the trans-relations and co-optations of both these contemplated worlds and the actual world(s) that confer meaning upon a Chinese box fiction as a whole.⁹

These "untold" narratives have similar "conceptualized" properties as the "told" narrative of which they are a part. When talking about "the formulation of story to a 'conceptualization' or a 'heuristic fiction,'" Robert Rawdon Wilson points out:

An embedded narrative (that is, any narrative that is contained within another narrative either through the voice of a character, abruptly transformed into a narrator, or through the use of some other convention such as the inclusion of extraneous discourse in the form of letters, messages, journals, or any other heterodiegetic inscription) breaks the time scheme of the narrative that incorporates it. It opens a fissure in the narrative order of the text that, whether

one thinks of this sequence as chronological or as radically perturbed (where, say, the chronology could be restored only on the level of story), introduces a different time scheme into the narrative Thus embedded narratives construct a textual anachrony that is different from the anachrony (if any) that the containing, homodiegetic narrative may possess.¹⁰

In postmodern Chinese box fiction, the plot is less a linear or sequential development than a narrative configuration or anachronistic heterarchy, which can take several kinds of patterns--"shapes, configuration, paradigms, geometrical forms, figural presences." As Wilson observes, "Such patterns are understood in, and recalled in, spatial terms. Diversely exemplified, but structurally unmodified, they persist unchanged through both text sequence and textual diachronicity and, to be understood, all their parts need to be grasped together."¹¹ In a Dallenbachian mise en abyme novels, or what Steven G. Kellman calls the "self-begetting novel," for instance, the narrative may become an infinite regression or a vicious circle. As Kellman shows, such a novel "is an account, usually first-person, of the development of a character to the point at which he is able to take up his pen and compose the novel we have just finished reading. Like an infinite recession of Chinese boxes, the self-begetting novel begins again where it ends."¹² These novels dramatize the

process of their own production, making self-writing and self-unwriting as an important part of their narrative matter.

The Chinese box fictions that are structured completely or partially in this form, such as Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook and John Barth's Lost in the Funhouse, constitute a variant of this convention. In these novels, we reexperience the (re)production of the text as the protagonist re-creates and comments on the circumstances of his or her writing. As Robert Alter has shown, the tradition to make writing a subject was started with Fielding's Tom Jones or possibly with Cervantes's Don Quixote in which the self-conscious discussions of the writing provide essential substance of the narrative.¹³ Such novels, when structured with the Chinese box strategy, are not only self-begetting, but also self-reflexive. The Chinese box narrative, when writing is one of its main concerns, usually enacts, or better, builds into the narrative discourse its metatext--a kind of countersign in the narrative discourse. Such metatexts generally present themselves as the products of an interpretative process that is available in the Chinese box structure of the narrative. As readers, we pursue the textual and metatextual sources of narrative configurations, simultaneously perceiving and

engaging with narrative reflexivity struggling to grow out of its own language and texture.

Some Chinese box fictions are self-regressive. In Postmodernist Fiction, Brian McHale proposes several literary implementations of self-regression, such as in Christine Brooke-Rose's Thru, where Larissa invents Armel, who in turn is the author of Larissa. Entering the world of Larissa's invention, and then the world of Armel's imagination, we find ourselves back in the world where Larissa invents Armel.¹⁴ The self-regression that McHale calls "strange loop" is actually a vicious circle, a Chinese box without bottom, which prevents us from deciding who, Armel or Larissa, is "really real." Thus, the self-regressive procedure may be seen as an extension of the Chinese box strategy which as a reflexive device bears witness of its own textual heterarchy. Usually, self-regressive Chinese box fictions produce a sense of decentralization and leave us with not only a textual acquisition but also, and more importantly, a sense of perpetuating procedure conducted in the light of the text's writing and unwriting of itself. Through regressive embedding, such novels generally present themselves as the products of a paradoxical process that is available in textual heterarchy.

Because it breaks down our habitual way of understanding and experiencing literary works, postmodern Chinese box strategy suggests a new way of reading. Most traditional novels operate along a linear sequence, and they also require the reader to follow the linear line to read. But postmodern Chinese box fiction disrupts traditional linearity with its simultaneity, fragmentation and self-regression, requiring other reading processes such as comparison, association, re-organization, and recreation. Almost all postmodern Chinese box fictions require a re-reading process, which is much more selective, trans-relational, nonsequential, and associative than the initial reading. The re-reading process is a process of establishing interrelationship among inner narratives through nonsequential selection and association. Usually only through re-reading, can one realize a Chinese box novel's understructural meaning. As a result, one's view of the novel is also broadened by the active re-reading process. In postmodern fiction, the reader is presented with multiple ways of reading, and as a result, with multiple ways of experiencing and interpreting the novel. This does not simply mean that the reader has to take over some the writer's role and function, but that the reader is answerable for realizing the text. The Golden Notebook, Lost in the Funhouse, and The

White Hotel, for example, are all multiple, plural, fragmented, and intertwined with many inner texts. The reader is forced to serve as an agent of their architectures: one is required to find or establish a meaningful architectonic trans-relation among the inner texts. In postmodern literature, therefore, reading or, rather, re-reading process is a anti-hierarchical process of association. Fragmented inner texts may be associated in different ways to co-optate various kaleidoscopic views. One is encouraged to realize one's own version of a novel.

We should be aware that the concept of Chinese box strategy used in this study is based on a heuristic metaphor, which calls our attention to textual heterarchy. As we have seen, postmodern Chinese box fiction assumes the reflexive power of re-con-textuality and re-organisational appeal that need not be inspired by a neat hierarchy of relations among inner texts. Destabilizing chronology, fabula, plot, and sequentiality, the Chinese box strategy proposes a spatialization of hypertextual relations that subordinates diachronic developments to the synchronic structuration of fiction. Although both temporal and spatial dimensions enter into the process of a Chinese box narrative, textual heterarchy should be regarded as capable of interrelating

inner narratives in an unforeseeable number of ways, so that the productive recontextualization of text is always open, potentially infinite. The signification of a Chinese box narrative can be explicated by various configurations of inner textual boxes and their interactions.

Postmodern Chinese box fiction challenges us to recognize textual heterarchy which insists on coexistence and interaction of different ways of using language. Postmodern Chinese box fiction is marked off from the earlier frame narratives and stories within a story by its syncretic inclusiveness and relativistic tension and re-creative potential. In its radical multiplication of centres of power and in its dissolution of every kind of totalization, the Chinese box strategy evokes a form of narrative democratization. It assembles a set of narratives in a relation both of discontinuity and of continuity, encouraging the reader to perform successive acts of resignification and recontextualization of previously established meanings. Breaking away from the logical and logocentric tradition with its stable, one-sided view of unity, the Chinese box strategy admits paradox, contradiction, interaction, trans-relation, multi-sequentiality, recontextualization, co-

optation and reflexivity, which have far-reaching implications for literature in general.

II

If someone puts a question to you and asks about the existing, mention the non-existent in your answer. If you are asked about the non-existent, mention the existing in your answer.... The mutual dependence of the two extremes will bring to light the significance of the "mean."

Ch'an and Zen Teaching¹⁵

There is no dialectic in the postmodern: the self-reflexive remains distinct from its traditionally accepted contrary--the historico-political context in which it is embedded.

Linda Hutcheon

A Poetics of Postmodernism¹⁶

All the Chinese box fictions to be discussed in this study are to various degrees reflexive fictions. But I do not regard Chinese box fiction only as straightforward "reflexive writing" as defined by Terence Cave, who states that "reflexive writing" contains "comments on itself," "mirrors

its own desire," and "presents itself as a topic."¹⁷ No doubt, some texts are reflexive in this sense; however, most postmodern fictions are reflexive not because they merely possess the notion of an act that turns back upon itself or calls attention to the nature of its own narrative act, but because they are always paradoxically allusive and socially internalized--that is, they contain an extra dimension--a dimension I would like to describe as historical ventriloquism--that alerts the reader to the socio-historical implications of the reflexive Chinese box strategy being performed. In other words, postmodern fiction may contain two types of reflexivity: micro-reflexivity and macro-reflexivity--the former is the means by which a text "comments on itself" or presents itself as a metatext, and the latter searches for the complicity of the reader by creating a readerly context that ventriloquially involves socio-historical implications. While micro-reflexivity is indeed an important feature of reflexive fiction, the macro-reflexive dimensions should not be overlooked. Actually, in a paradoxical way, the reflexive strategy, though thrusting itself into the foreground, does not foreclose on its relation to larger cultural, socio-historical contexts. As Ross Chambers shows in Story and Situation, reflexive strategy can be used to produce a variety

of different reader positions in a narrative;¹⁸ so, at least in terms of its relation to readers, a reflexive narrative is also a text open to a larger socio-historical context. Moreover, precisely because of its essential paradoxicality, postmodern reflexive fiction provides a paradigm characterizing the passage from micro-reflexivity to macro-reflexivity, which is concerned in its acts of trans-relating with the social discourses.

Actually, against Cave's narrow definition of "reflexive writing," some contemporary theorists are beginning to see reflexivity in larger contexts. In Reflexive Paradoxes, T. S. Champlin assembles for general discussion several conceptually reflexive notions. He points out that because of the apparent resemblance between them, reflexivity is often confused with other concepts such as self-reference, self-consciousness, self-awareness, autorepresentation, and textual narcissism.¹⁹ In Metafiction, Patricia Waugh talks, though very briefly, about the issue of "the politically 'radical' status of aesthetically 'radical' texts," suggesting that reflexive metafiction can be discussed within a context of cultural and social interaction.²⁰ Linda Hutcheon's A Poetics of Postmodernism shows that the very reflexivity of postmodern fiction presents an outward motion, specifically toward

historiography, through the involvement of the reader, whose active role is emphasized in the process of narrative reflexivity.²¹ Robert Siegle's The Politics of Reflexivity also argues that all narrative is reflexive to some extent and when this function is in evidence, its effect is to draw attention to the conditions of meaning in culture and society.²² Contemporary theories of reflexive narratives may find a parallel in Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of novel. At the heart of Bakhtin's theory is a vision of text as comprising various inner texts in a state of constant struggle.²³ Postmodern Chinese box fiction assembles a set of inner texts in a relation both of discontinuity and of continuity so that the reader is required to perform successive acts of resignification and recontextualization of previously established meanings--a dialogic process. A macro-reflexive narrative provides a reflexive mirror space where meaning occurs as a function of the constant interplay among inner texts. If dialogic interaction operates on the two levels of a narrative text--its micro/formal and macro/social modalities, reflexive narrative might be considered as a kind of text whose formal and social modalities are internally trans-related.

My use of the notion of narrative reflexivity is intended to suggest that the reflexive strategy uncovers a great deal about the postmodern narrative practice--for instance, the codes by which we organize reality, the means by which we organize words about it into narrative, the ways in which readers are drawn into narrative, and the nature of our relation to the linguistic medium and to the reality behind/inside it. Hence the reflexive strategy is not merely an incidental trick or technique in postmodern fiction, but rather is a narrative configuration that reacts to the larger issues challenging the postmodern novelist and artist, since far from a single focus chosen from any conceptual angle, reflexive narrative usually encompasses multiple focuses and multiple voices in its potentially simultaneous achievement. In its ineluctable multiplicity, the reflexive strategy subverts unitary discourse and announces multiplex discourses that are bound by their formal complicity with historical ventriloquism. In a sense, narrative reflexivity is one of the most important ways of revealing the semiotic, philosophical, and ideological process taking place in postmodern fiction, a process or a counter-process that considers not only what fiction says but the socio-historical grounds and means for saying it.

In most postmodern novels we find a combination of discursive reflexivity and a sense of socio-historical inclusiveness, a kind of configuration which is directed at the mechanics and assumptions of composing, interpreting, structuring and positing. As Siegle observes, narrative reflexivity operates at a point where "a thoroughgoing semiotics borders on ideological critique."²⁴ Siegle's contention of a relationship within narrative reflexivity between semiotics and ideological critique can be strengthened with reference to the historical sense developed by Bakhtin, who claims that literature is both autotelic and referential on the ground of heteroglossia out of which social and linguistic dialogue arises. Linguistic and cultural exchange is enacted in the way people reaccentuate and mix the linguistic and axiological belief systems. There is a paradox in Bakhtin's argument, that is, the paradox between the autonomous and the referential functions of literary signs and countersigns in a reflexive work; however, Bakhtin tries to resolve this paradox by showing that literary language has a special way of pointing to reality: its reference is oblique and metaphorical. What we encounter in a narrative text is an analogous recontextualization of social relations. As Bakhtin observes, "Meaning cannot (and does not wish to) change

physical, material, and other phenomena; it cannot act as a material force." Bakhtin also points out:

And it does not need to do this; it itself is stronger than any force, it changes the total contextual meaning of any event and reality without changing its actual (existential) composition one iota; everything remains as it was but it acquires a completely different contextual meaning (the semantic transformation of existence). Each word of a text is transformed in a new context.²⁵

Literary language is not socially reducible, but it is one of the many simultaneously coexisting language varieties available to the author as a socially, culturally, and historically situated being, since "each word is transformed in a new context."

Out of this observation, however, come another couple of significant and illuminating paradoxes: precisely because the referents of words/signs in literary language have no existential value, they are, to use Nora Stovel's words, "Janus-faced," and like the symbolic sign that "defies final analysis merely by turning its other cheek";²⁶ and precisely because these autonomous signs are elusively "Janus-faced," transformable "in a new context," the reflexive literary work refers to, or more precisely, alludes to a total context of reality. The reflexive "Janus-faced" quality of literature's allusiveness to reality provides valuable images of the texture of existing history or culture. Actually, most

postmodern authors do not deny the referential or allusive dimensions of their works, but rather, they, as the characters in Margaret Drabble's novels do, "habitually view everything in figurative terms," "because they initially confuse the ideal world of art with the literal world of reality."²⁷ The reference or allusion beyond the text is affirmed because of the implicitly "figurative" qualities of narrative reflexivity, which develops a metaphorical sense between literary, semiotics, and ideological, historical critique. In its reflexivity, postmodern Chinese box fiction reflects within itself both the whole of social reality and the attitude of the subject towards that reality. The conspicuous otherness of the fictive worlds projected by postmodern Chinese box novels might well be described as figural rather than literal with respect to the terms of human reality.

There is an attempt in contemporary theories to re-engage the problem of meaning production within a reflexive discourse and to challenge the orthodox position that narrative reflexivity is totally self-referential. As Hayden White points out, the question of referentiality is "the most vexed problem in modern literary criticism."²⁸ I do not intend to discuss this problem in detail in this study, yet I want to point out its relation to the question of reflexivity of

postmodern Chinese box fiction. White's treatment of the problem of reference is to explain historical discourse in terms of a set of tropes and ideological positions which combine in different ways to produce a sense of history. White's concept of "metahistory" may remind us of Paul Ricoeur's theory that places the notion of narrative reflexivity within a range of other discourses. Ricoeur relates narrativity to historicity, suggesting that "the narrative function" should be considered as "an activity or a form of life." Ricoeur uses the term of "directedness" to describe the directable trans(re)lation of "language game" into history. It seems that both history and fiction involve a paradoxical mode of macro-reflexivity, because referentiality is always present in fiction, however self-reflexive a form.²⁹ This position can be reformulated to accommodate the insight that reflexive fiction always indicates an extra outward direction. Since narratives are a special kind of speech act, as Chambers accurately observes, in which the told is indistinguishable from the telling,³⁰ macro-reflexivity is inevitably and paradoxically an integral part of postmodern discourse.

Reflexive narratives, however, do not use straightforward referential models to authorize the outward directedness of

narrative configurations, but take the awareness of their own fictionality as a narcissistic facade of narration. Within this context, some critics proclaim the postmodern novel's unprecedented engagement with textual narcissism, thus validating an account of the production of interior meanings in texts. Some critics seeking to legitimate the narcissistic use of language as the novelistic practice par excellence have coined the term "surfiction." As Raymond Federman says, "to write is to produce meaning and not reproduce a pre-existing meaning that supposedly precedes the words."³¹ The surfictionist theory, rejecting old fashioned critical models, focuses on the stylistic idiosyncrasies of postmodern fiction. But production of meaning in literature, as Bakhtin notices, is always a two way process that "strives organically to assimilate material into language and language into material."³² Narrative reflexivity, after all, is a culturally patterned literary phenomenon which, to use Hutcheon's terms, presents world-disclosure as a vitally "inconclusive process" rather than a "formed product."³³ Literary language, as Bakhtin conceives, has a peculiar intermediary status between two extremes--the given and the created. That is why language can be used to trans-relate

history and fiction, or to bridge the gaps between matter and consciousness in a reflexive process of narration.

Postmodern fiction that articulates meaning through macro-reflexive discourse does not make the object of imitation less interesting than the medium itself; and reflexivity does not simply mean narcissism. Although the claim to process or mobility of the signifier do put the cultural order of the signified under interrogation, a postmodern text is not as a result reduced to a directionless drift. In other words, narrative reflexivity should be understood within the need to clarify, not to deny, an anchoring context of determinate cultural forces; and the surfictionist position should therefore be reformulated to accommodate the paradox that, although literature is a type of discourse which may produce meaning independently of its origin(ality), yet it is inevitably situated by the socio-historio-cultural context in which the text is produced. The formal disposition of historical reality may be conceived as indirect ventriloquism of cultural (un)consciousness. Obviously, such an approach approximates the kind of analysis Fredric Jameson proposes in The Prison-House, where he speaks of signification as "the transposition from one level of language to another, from one language to another language,"

so that the availability of meaning is seen as "nothing but the possibility of such transcoding."³⁴ But such "transcoding" is realized with a sense of anchoring force of the contextual pressures that underlie social discourses and their fictional reproduction. Narrative reflexivity in postmodern fiction which, to use McHale's words, has "the effect of interrupting and complicating the ontological 'horizon' of fiction, multiplying its worlds, and laying bare the process of world-construction."³⁵ Thus, through a reflexive control of the interior narrativity of fiction, postmodern fictions set in motion a carnival of discourses, and situate themselves within a constantly "transcoding" and "transgressing" process.

Of course, macro-reflexivity does not suggest that postmodern Chinese box fiction approximates a simple transcoding of history, since the contention of simple transcoding process either denies postmodern works' detachedness too freely, or it overstates the historical or ideological implications of a literary work. Apparently, the linkage between historicity and narrativity should be relocated outside the existing repertoire of historical and literary discourses, somewhere beyond the conventional understanding of history and fiction. In other words,

postmodern fiction is not immersed in history itself, but in the ventriloquism of historicity. No doubt, fiction in the era of postmodernism cannot be said to copy a "history." However, to extend Hutcheon's conception of "historiographical metafiction,"³⁶ one might say that it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate historicity from narrativity, narrativity from readability, and readability from historicity, because history has been reintegrated as part of the process of articulating/actualizing fiction. A novel may not have a direct historical indication, but "its interpretability as a complex sign for which other discursive signs can be substituted," as Chambers has observed, contextualizes itself in social and historical discourses.³⁷ Therefore, postmodern Chinese box fiction, with the "seductive" force of its narrative reflexive consciousness, projects itself into the historical ventriloquism.

There are four observations that I want to present here in support of this argument. The first is the narrative characteristics of Chinese box fiction, in which the textual innovation is obvious: for example, the temporal reversals, heterarchical or anti-hierarchical association, multi-sequential trans-relation in Lost in the Funhouse, the raw materials for writing, episodic repetitions, and crafted

hypertextuality of The Golden Notebook, and the rippling parallelism, and almost ostentatious simultaneity and non-linearity of The White Hotel. All these narrative performances have interior functions within these novels, but they also show an outward directedness that drives each of the novels into its particular set of contextual resonances or "allusiveness," in which narrative macro-reflexivity is set in motion. In other words, at some distance from what in a non-reflexive novelistic discourse would be read as an authorial presence, such reflexive narratives seem to be driven by the force of their own conditions. So the Chinese box fiction has the "alienating" effect of "alluding" to a source of nonauthorial historical conditioning and the "value that alienation confers on it."³⁸ The sense of such an "alluded" or ventriloquistically historical and cultural conditioning is perhaps what Chambers suggests when he says that "the study of literature as transaction must open eventually onto ideological and cultural analysis of these enabling agreements."³⁹

My second observation is of another paradoxical implication found in Chinese box fiction's refusal to face directly the very palpability of history. Postmodern scepticism carries a countersign to the written history, and

to the conventional accounts of what is so often called the historiography. It is true that history is not always writable or representable, but the paradox is that history's unwritability also confirms, in fact, the very gravity of the historical force being challenged. The paradoxical power of postmodern Chinese box fictions lies in their allusion to both the simultaneously inscrutable and irresistible nature of historical forces. While it is possible, however, to argue that postmodern fiction engages historicity in the manner suggested by Hutcheon's concept of "historiographical metafiction," there must also be a sense in which narrative reflexivity given in the fiction of how "the speaking subject"⁴⁰ is positioned in discourse is itself rooted in history. In other words, though it is difficult to identify directly the operation of the socio-cultural unconscious in postmodern Chinese box fiction, it cannot be denied that historical ventriloquism enables postmodern fiction, after all, to encode its own historicity in a reflexive mode. What Chinese box fiction offers is what Michel Foucault calls the "true historical sense," the one that "confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference."⁴¹

My third observation is that self-critical, interrogative stance is typical of narrative reflexivity, which highlights the difficulties posed by the tradition of novel-writing which demands a fidelity to experience. Postmodern Chinese box fiction breaks this tradition by treating language as having a peculiar intermediary status between representation and experience. As Bakhtin observes, "there does exist a common plane that methodologically justifies out juxtaposing them: all languages of heteroglossia. . . are specific points of view on the world"--points of view that grow out of and point back toward life. "As such, they encounter one another and coexist in the consciousness of real people--first and foremost in the creative consciousness of people who write novels."⁴² The passage from "the consciousness of real people" to "creative consciousness" is a process of trans(re)lation in which the "intuition" is translated into the "expression of that knowledge in viable forms." Such a trans(re)lating process, as Joyce Cary notices, "is always precarious and difficult. It is, in short, a kind of translation, not from one language into another, but from one state of existence into another, from the receptive into the creative, from the purely sensuous impression into the purely reflective and critical art."⁴³ History, as lived

experience, is formless, while to write is to give form, to create patterns out of randomness, and to translate experience into a representation. But, by definition, translation cannot be true, since it is a process of constantly approximating, but never duplicating lived experience.

The understanding of this situation makes it possible for us to grasp the validity of what Jacques Derrida calls an "a-logical logic"⁴⁴ of partiality in literary representation. My fourth observation is that if the process of translation is part of narrative reflexivity, then the "a-logical logic" of partiality can help us see that all reflexive text is not a unified single text, since postmodern Chinese box fiction usually involves a multiple, re-re-trans(re)lating process. Actually narrative reflexivity contributes to the visibility of postmodern fiction's textual multiplicity and heterarchy, in which, each text comprises various inner texts, voices, and perspectives in a relation both of discontinuity and of continuity. In a sense, narrative reflexivity, with acknowledgement of partiality of each inner text, evokes a form of narrative democratization. In its radical multiplication of centres of power and in its dissolution of every kind of totalization, textual multiplicity acknowledges partialization, suggesting an interplay between totalizable

inner texts and non-totalizable Text. This interplay contributes a level of complexity to postmodern narrative, making readily visible those confrontational cooperations that might otherwise melt into a "unified" Text or "canonized" History. Furthermore, by highlighting unexpected partiality, it enlarges the space between the surface and depth of the postmodern fiction, and, as a result, shakes the reader out of complacent habits of apprehension of text as a unity. Obviously, postmodern narrative partiality reveals a mystery of one-versus-many-ness with the metaphor of plural Chinese box, and helps us observe the heterogeneity where people tend to perceive only homogeneity, especially in the apparent wholeness of text, history, and language. As Bakhtin suggests, we need to establish "a special polyphonic artistic thinking" that extends "beyond the bounds of the novel as a genre. This mode of thinking makes available those sides of a human being, and above all the thinking human consciousness and dialogic sphere of its existence, which are not subject to artistic assimilation from monologic positions."⁴⁵

Reflexive narrative may not display a comprehensive sense of history, but it mediates between histories and History, between texts and Text, between experiences and Experience. As Charles Russell points out, such an "artwork simultaneously

casts light on the workings of aesthetic conceptualization and on art's sociological situation."⁴⁶ For Bakhtin, there is a deep connection between interior narrativity and external politics. Bakhtin writes, "The internal politics of style . . . is determined by its external politics."⁴⁷ Strictly speaking, however, social practices can not be put entirely into verbal discourses, but history may be "an absent cause" for fiction, as Jameson argues. Against the popular conception that "history is a text," Jameson states,

history is not a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but . . . as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and . . . our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious.⁴⁸

In many postmodern fictions such as The White Hotel, The Golden Notebook, and Lost in the Funhouse, historical presence is usually represented as being in a situation of narrative ventriloquism--that is, in these fictions, there is a recognition of the paradox of a historical reality that "never comes to formulation as a concept or signifier in its own right . . . yet which places a floor beneath the infinite regression and flight of the signifier."⁴⁹ Paradoxically, Chinese box fiction is not simple reflexive configuration where history is reduced to accentuate its essential values;

on the contrary, it puts history into question, challenging the traditional notion that history is "an illusion of linear succession, of idealistic continuity, of a series of 'presences.'" ⁵⁰

Narrative reflexivity evokes a consciousness in which many trans-related inner texts enter into dialogue with one another, mutually illuminating. Macro-reflexive text is a text in which an author makes use of compositional forms that allow these coexisting, dialogically engaged texts to achieve a reaccentuated expression--a new expression that advocates freedom of speech, narrative democracy, and multiplication of centres of power. It refers to one's creative imagination and flexibility to manipulate canonical usage of language, against the power of canonization--the social endorsement of certain linguistic and narrative rules which are taken as a standard. In essence narrative as a language art is a social construct, and should be taken in its most complete sense, as an asynchronous sharing of inner texts--a communicative dialogism for the creation of new meanings, new literary forms, new scripts for the understanding the world. If the novel for Bakhtin stands to the other older genres in the same relation as heteroglossia to the homogenizing and canonizing forces of language, postmodern Chinese box fiction now replaces the

novel in reaction against other canonizing forces, among which the older novelistic genre is included. Narrative reflexivity undermines the canonizing power of centralization or hegemony that always and everywhere posits itself against the ubiquitously decentralising forces.

The Chinese box strategy subverts the traditional solid and centred historicity with liquefied, decentred narrativity. In this kind of fiction, the search for unity--narrative or historical--is constantly frustrated and partialized. This is the paradox that preserves the particular characteristics of postmodern narrative subtlety. If history is to be located in postmodern fiction, it will not be at the level of some ideal content which is built into the novels; it will appear instead in the patterns of configuration that the postmodern novel implicitly endorses or rejects, and in the process of "producing [discursive] authority where there is no [historical] power."⁵¹ Narrative "seduction," similar to other forms of "seduction"--political, cultural, or historical--is permeated by the desire for power, control, and authority. If we want to stress, following Edward Said's famous concepts,⁵² the "authority" and "agency" of fiction, we can find a kind of authority by examining the connections and configurations that the Chinese box strategy establishes

within and without the novels; we can discover a ventriloquial dimension of social, cultural, and political heritage that the Chinese box strategy nurtures, against those that are disclaimed. Therefore, more than a manifest and parodic reaction to both traditional realism and avant-garde anti-historicism, postmodern Chinese box fiction embodies the attempt to rediscover the magic, gratuitous power of language, and to "restore language to its metaphorical intensity--to transform words from pellets of information into channels for perception--and thereby to net that elusive reality that lies just on the far side of language."⁵³

CHAPTER ONE

The Golden Notebook:

Doris Lessing's Chinese Box

Let us (re)present the un(re)presentable.

Linda Hutcheon

A Poetics of Postmodernism¹

Many readers missed the point of The Golden Notebook when it was first published in 1962. In spite of the challenging and significant structural configuration, most critics read the novel only as an autobiographic sketch of the author, and praised the novel not for its architectonic complexity, but for its thematical treatment of the issue of feminism and

modern women's liberation. In despair at various misreadings and misinterpretations, Lessing appended the now famous 1971 "Preface" to her novel, in which she said, "But this novel was not a trumpet for Women's Liberation. It described many female emotions of aggression, hostility, resentment. It put them into print"; "But my major aim was to shape a book which would make its own comment, a wordless statement: to talk through the way it was shaped."² Since then, inspired by Lessing's own revealing comment, critics started to re-evaluate this novel in a new critical context and produced numerous appreciative essays and studies that must have alleviated Lessing's artistic chagrin. Generally reflecting critical trends, most recent criticism of The Golden Notebook shares one characteristic: it has moved away from reconciling Lessing's work with the social, realistic tradition towards formalistic analysis that seeks to place this novel within the modernist aesthetic milieu. These studies variously suggest that The Golden Notebook, like most modern novels, comes to be one more example of self-conscious experimentation that demonstrates a distrust of great realism. Such criticism concerns itself not with Lessing as an old-fashioned novelist, but with Lessing as an experimentalist, a true modernist, a

writer who sought to subvert technically the conventions of realism.

In this chapter, I would like to widen the inquiry mentioned above in order to show how Lessing, by making The Golden Notebook even more performative, reflexive than modernist fictions, has characterized what is now considered to be postmodern aesthetic concerns. Like most postmodern fictions, The Golden Notebook is self-consciously concerned with its own aesthetic processes and asserts paradigmatically what is now the postmodernist watermark of identification: that is, one cannot pass through the logosphere to experience a (re)production of the objective world; but instead one must accept the creative process of language as a reality--a trans(re)lating system that meaningfully negotiates the transactions between the human mind and the objective world.

However, to analyze The Golden Notebook only in terms of postmodernism--that is, simply to discuss this novel's postmodern features, would elucidate neither Lessing's own comments concerning her intent nor the novel's unique architectonic configuration. Therefore, I shall discuss The Golden Notebook more specifically as a reflexive Chinese box fiction, a kind of "historiographic metafiction" that in part seeks to be self-interpreting, examining its own narrative

premises, or, as defined by Linda Hutcheon in A Poetics of Postmodernism, as fiction that is "both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lays claim to historical events and personages." "Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past." Historiographic metafiction, as Hutcheon explains, "always works within conventions in order to subvert them."³ Probably Lessing has never been a metafictional stylist, but she is definitely a metafictional novelist, who subverts a tradition while maintaining its novelty.

While varied treatments of the metafictional dimensions of The Golden Notebook are possible, one particular manifestation of the metafictional mode under my consideration is the Chinese box strategy. Through an interaction of multiple inner narratives which attempt to explain one another, the Chinese box strategy de(con)structs the reality of each individual narrative box. The nesting of various trans-related narrative boxes impairs the attribution of any locus of narration and undermines the conventional presence of a unified and decisive signification beyond the play of

proliferating narratives. On several occasions, Lessing has indicated what she attempted to do in her novel with the Chinese box strategy: "The way it's constructed," she pointed out in an interview with Florence Howe, "says what the book is about."⁴ "My major aim was to shape a book which would make its own argument, a wordless statement: to talk through the way it was shaped."⁵ Its point is in "the relation of the parts to each other." The Chinese box strategy, with its powerful capacity of complicating relations between parts and levels, serves Lessing's purpose very well. Probably not the least fascinating is the way the Chinese box strategy mediates the passage from the problematics of writing to the problematics of reading. For the cross-referential and cross-fertilizing play of texts within/of texts, stories within/of stories, wor(1)ds within/of wor(1)ds draws out a paradoxical procedure for the recessed alternation of frame and frame-break which presents a challenge as well as an invitation to the reader. Therefore, the Chinese box strategy, as Lessing uses it in The Golden Notebook, not only accommodates a literary self-examination, but also serves as a medium for exploring the connection between words and worlds and for problematizing the writing process in a socio-historio-political context.

I

As readers move through a web or network of texts, they continually shift the center--and hence the focus or organizing principle--of their investigation and experience.

George P. Landow

Hypertext⁶

The Golden Notebook is, first of all, a novel that turns the artist's mode into a metaphor for its own concerns, a metafiction that transforms the process of writing into the subject of writing. Within the novel there are multiple inner narrative boxes, created by the different narrative voices of Anna Wulf, the invented and inventing author, who has a novel entitled Frontiers of War published. Since the publication of her first novel, Anna has been unable to write for

publication, but she keeps writing journals in four separate, coloured notebooks that she uses as categorical boxes to contain the stuff she picks up from different aspects of her life. Side by side with the notebooks are the sections of a story entitled Free Women. The sections of Free Women at first seem to have been written by an omniscient author and thus to represent a objective rendering of reality in The Golden Notebook--as distinct from realities described by each notebook. The conclusion of the Golden Notebook, however, suggests that they have been written by Anna--that is, they are a fictionalized version of the experiences recorded in the notebooks. Therefore, similar to The Shadow of the Third, they are a fiction within the fiction, taking a step backward into an ever-increasing textual horizons. In addition, the sequence of juxtaposed narratives is repeated four times: Free Women, the Black Notebook, the Red Notebook, the Yellow Notebook and the Blue Notebook, occur in that sequence four times. Then appears the Golden Notebook and finally Free Women section 5. The notebooks and the Free Women cover varying amounts of "historical" time domains. The Free Women sections all take place in 1957, that is, at the end of the period covered by the notebooks. Thus the novel as a whole, from a retrospective point of view, reconstructs an anticipatory beginning by

talking about the end. To use Paul Ricoeur's words, the "beginning" of The Golden Notebook is like a conclusion that "gives the story an 'end point,' which, in turn, furnishes the point of view from which the story can be perceived as forming a whole."⁷

Such a discontinuous arrangement challenges the reader to reconstruct Anna's overlapping experiences while moving through the non-linear, co-optative narratives, producing the novelist's predicament in mirroring a multi-layered history. In S/Z Roland Barthes writes: "By participating in the need to set forth the end of every action (conclusion, interruption, closure, denouement) the readerly (text) declares itself to be historical."⁸ However, the narrative dislocation caused by the paradoxical temporal structure disrupts the reading process and as a result distances the reader from the history that Anna attempts to recreate as objectively as possible. Jeremy Brooks is surely right when he says, "This 'Chinese box' arrangement is similar to Brecht's 'alienation technique' on the stage."⁹ What the reader finds is a complex textual heterarchy in which he must move back and forth multi-sequentially through the book in order to reorganize the puzzling interrelationships of its inner texts in a meaningful way.

"Alienation" or discontinuity is not all that Lessing wants to accomplish in The Golden Notebook. As she insists, "the point of the novel is in the relation of the parts to each other." The relation in this novel is very much a matter of comparing, associating and evaluating different inner narrative boxes, and activate or reactivate the interaction between inner texts into new meaningful patterns. To approximate the relation, we could borrow the well-known metaphor of "hinge" (la brisure) from Jacques Derrida. In Of Grammatology Derrida tries to draw our attention to the double meaning of the term brisure: it means both "breach" and "joint," designating a paradoxical division that is both disjunct and conjunct.¹⁰ As categorical boxes, the notebooks contain different aspects of Anna's life as well as the major critical issues of the novel: racism (primarily in the Black Notebook), politics (the Red one), art (Yellow) and the plight of the modern women (Blue). The materials in the notebooks are overlapped, interfaced and trans-related: for instance, much of the Black Notebook is also concerned with art, some of the red with the status of women, the Yellow with male-female sexuality, the Blue with all of these. The meaning of the novel is articulated through the interplay and co-optation of its trans-related narrative boxes. The production of the

meaning is possible, just because the discontinuity of the narratives does not cancel out their connectedness. Therefore, the novel as a whole appears to be a synergetic configuration in which the larger box has characteristics that could have been predicted from the properties of inner boxes that have composed it.

The reason why Lessing constructs her novel in such a complicated way is obviously not that she takes narcissistic pleasure in playing with pure narrative boxes. As a writer firmly committed to the novel as a medium of social awareness, Lessing does not hope the reader will merely suspend disbelief and retreat into a curious appreciation of the fantastic form. The problems and questions raised by The Golden Notebook are intricately part of the shape of the novel, which must make a "statement." In other words, in spite of the fact that The Golden Notebook is foregrounding its complex configuration, it combines the formalist concern with broader literary, intellectual, political and historical issues. Such an inclusive, kaleidoscopic configuration is similar to what Nora F. Stovel calls "multi-media form." In her discussion of another novel published in the 1960s, Stovel points out, such a "multi-media form would convey the frenetic multi-faceted

quality of contemporary culture."¹¹ Lessing describes her intention in a similar way:

Writing about oneself, one is writing about others, since your problems, pains, pleasures, emotions--and your extraordinary and remarkable ideas--can't be yours alone. The way to deal with the problem of "subjectivity", that shocking business of being preoccupied with the tiny individual who is at the same time caught up in such an explosion of terrible and marvellous possibilities, is to see him as a microcosm and in this way to break through the personal, the subjective, making the personal general, as indeed life always does.¹²

In this sense, The Golden Notebook with its "multi-faceted quality" can be regarded as a typical example of what Larry McCaffery refers to when he is affirming that this kind of fiction is both metafictionally narcissistic and yet speaking to us powerfully about the socio-historical realities. "It has thus become a kind of model for the contemporary writer, being self-conscious about its literary heritage and the world outside the page."¹³

One of the issues that relate the "literary heritage" with "the world outside the page" is the problem of literary representation. In her diary writing, in her private fictions, Anna Wulf always attempts to come to terms with issues of the meaning of art, the relation between art and the world, and reality in literature. All of these concerns converge in a network in which the Chinese box strategy provides a writing

laboratory, a writing space where Anna constantly try and cancel presentations, re-presentations and re-re-presentations of what she believes to be the un-representable experience and history. This means is similar to what Brian McHale calls "writing under erasure," a "Heideggerian trick" developed by Derrida. In discussing Clarence Major's Reflex and Bone Structure, McHale says:

Major's 'un-projection' of Dale recalls Jacques Derrida's practice of placing certain verbal signs sous rature, under erasure:

le signe ~~est~~ cette ~~chose~~ mal nommée
Physically canceled, yet still legible beneath the cancelation, these signs sous rature continue to function in the discourse even while they are excluded from it. Derrida's purpose in using this typographical sleight-of-hand is, of course, to remind us that certain key concepts in western metaphysics--such as, in this case, existence and objecthood--continue to be indispensable to philosophical discourse even though that same discourse demonstrates their illegitimacy. They both cannot be admitted, yet cannot be excluded; so he places them sous rature.¹⁴

The "Heideggerian trick" of displaying both the word and the mark of cancellation, provokes a dissatisfaction with literary representation and leads us to think about problems we pose to ourselves. Lessing may be said to employ the Chinese box strategy in the same way to interrogate literary re-representation. The Golden Notebook, as Patrocínio P. Schweichart observes, is a "collection of cancelled novels,

novels Lessing had refused to write but nevertheless had written."¹⁵

No doubt, this self-critical, interrogative stance is typical of what Robert Alter calls "self-conscious fiction,"¹⁶ which dialectically separates art and life, and asks the reader to examine the distinction and to see how they interact. At times, the contrast between Anna's fictional rendering of events and her diary accounts brings into central focus the question of how life becomes art, of how experience is trans(re)lated into a literary creation. The essential motivation in Anna's writing is an obsessive desire to translate her experience into a meaningful artistic work. To use a metaphysical term, Anna is engaged in an ongoing experiment in "artistic alchemy," which, metaphorically, is a process through which art transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary. Anna devotes herself to inventing patterns that facilitate the transformation of her experience into something precious. Art, as Anna feels, is to create patterns out of chaos. By conscious selection, organization, association, and reconstruction, Anna attempts to create an artistic form to contain her experience. Almost all the stories Anna has written are neat and natty.

In contrast to Anna's stories, her journals are more or less a chaotic composition that assembles bits and pieces of her life. They seem to be untranslated or untranslatable records of her experience that include various life elements such as evocations of her feelings, her occasional moods of despair, detailed portraits of the people around her, pieces of critical analysis, passages from books and newspapers, and notes describing her psychological problems. Anna's journals have important implication for our examination of the complex mental processes involved in creating literary works. Because of these journals, we can see how Anna's fiction was made. Her journals reveal Anna's insistent desire to trans(re)late her experience in various ways.

Anna knows that it is difficult to distinguish between trans(re)lation--to give an appropriate expression to her experience, and falsification--to create untruthful representation of the world. Anna herself is wary of her constant need to trans-create:

I came upstairs from the scene between Tommy and Molly and instantly began to turn it into a short story. It struck me that my doing this--turning everything into fiction--must be an evasion. Why not write down, simply, what happened between Molly and her son today? Why do I never write down, simply what happens? Why don't I keep a diary? Obviously, my changing everything into fiction is simply a means of concealing something from myself.
(211)

In Anna's chaotic journals, there is a special dimension that relates Anna's creative translation to a co-optative collage composition. Collage, as a concept borrowed from painting, underlies Anna's sense of fiction writing, both in theory and in practice. In fact, collage art, as Max Ernst observes, is "visual alchemy,"¹⁷ which works magic transformations. But Anna's collage is not an ordinary one; it resembles a three dimensional painting, created by a computer, with an image hidden beneath the pixilated surface. The materials Anna uses in her journal collage are drawn and translated from her personal experience. To these materials she adds reflexive interpretations arising from her experience of dreams, visions, and hallucinations. She emphasizes the validity of unconscious experience in her translation or trans-creation of the actual, conscious experience, which she carefully evokes and analyzes.

Anna as a figure in her verbal collage, to describe in F. L. Radford' and R. Wilson's terms, is "discontinuous and void," and "a problem in conceptual structure." "One needs to search out the principle of organization (or artifice) upon which the series of attributes hangs together, derives coherence, and becomes (and only then becomes) a figure, the images of a human person, a character."¹⁸ The vast tissue of

Anna's entwined life and writing reveals the fascinating way in which Anna mediates between conscious and unconscious experience, building an intricate configuration to inscribe herself as a character. The "principle of organization" may be observed at work with the materials of Anna's experience, busily shaping feelings, intuitions, observations, and ideas into the textual interrelationships. Anna's sensibility or psychological model is shaped in her stories and journal composition--that is, a self in quest of real representation of experience. From the presence of this authorial self radiate perceptions and insights that endow her writing. In the notebooks, the self that permeates the textual presence is Anna's own; in other narrative boxes the author's self seems to be concealed behind projections of other selves and characters with whom the author co-optates in different ways. In every case, though, it is the motion of this self-reflexive author toward awareness that provides the stuff that holds together the various inner texts in the composition of the book. The glue in Anna's collage is the "I" who perceives, reflects, interacts and trans-relates with others, interpreting her experience and expressing what she has experienced. But the "I" in this novel is multiple entity; moreover, it should be considered as a narrative act or

function, rather than a centre of consciousness or origin of meaning.

One of the most obvious paradoxes of Anna's art is that it is by definition a structured, patterned group of words with which the writer strives to represent experience, and to trans-relate matter and consciousness, as Bakhtin observes. Experience, however, is an indeterminate process without apparent shape or meaning. As Teresa de Lauretis points out, "experience" is a "process by which, for all social things, subjectivity is constructed."¹⁹ This is the process in which Anna slowly inscribes and realizes herself as a character through constant writing and unwriting, making and unmaking, constructing and deconstructing, recording and translating. These processes are reflected in the interaction between art as a production and art as a re-production. In a reflexive comment at the end of a section of the story The Shadow of the Third, Anna explains the problem of trans(re)lation in story writing:

The trouble with this story is that it is written in terms of analysis of the laws of dissolution of the relationship between Paul and Ella. I don't see any other way to write it. As soon as one has lived through something, it falls into a pattern. And the pattern of an affair, even one that has lasted five years and has been as close as a marriage, is seen in terms of what ends it, that is why all this is untrue. Because while

living through something one doesn't think like that at all.

...
Literature is analysis after the event. (210)

It seems that literature, at least for Anna, cannot be true, since it is a process of translating or approximating, but never duplicating lived experience. Every piece of writing that Anna does in the hope to render her experience faithfully is seen as a "failure" or "non-performance." Anna rejects Frontiers of War because she feels that it is not true; she rejects The Shadow of the Third because it is untrue to the lived experience; and she even rejects all her notebooks: "So all that is a failure too. The blue notebook, which I had expected to be the most truthful of the notebooks, is worse than any of them" (412). We are left, at this juncture, with the inevitable sense that reality is unrepresentable or untranslatable, which is in fact, one of Lessing's points:

One has this feeling after writing a novel, there it is: 120,000 words; it's got a nice shape and the reviewers will say this and that. And the bloody complexity that went into it. And it's always a lie. And the terrible despair. So you've written a good novel or a moderate novel, but what does it actually say about what you've experienced? The truth is--absolutely nothing. Because you can't.²⁰

Beyond this rather obvious point, however, Lessing is trying to emphasize the philosophic issue inherent in the paradox that art which springs primarily from self-revelation should

at the same time be a lie. Also, she establishes a frame of reference in which reality, though unrepresentable, is constantly invoked as a basis for reflexive presentation.

Lessing touches on two important issues of novel writing in the era of postmodernism. One has to do with critical, analytical awareness, the other is a problem of translation. Joyce Cary once wrote an essays on the creative process and his explanation of the problem may make Lessing's point clearer:

The passage from intuition to reflection, from knowledge of the real to expression of that knowledge in viable forms is always precarious and difficult. It is, in short, a kind of translation, not from one language into another, but from one state of existence into another, from the receptive into the creative, from the purely sensuous impression into the purely reflective and critical art.²¹

When a writer attempts to tell truthfully what happens, he or she must present a textualized reality that usually has totally different values, because of words' intermediary status. With this realization, Anna, in her despair over the in-between-ness of literature, finds that truthful representation is impossible. This realization, however, does not stop her from writing. The point Lessing makes clear is that narrative is constituted more by its telling than by what it tells, and that it is an act, a performance more than a

representation of action. Actually, reality is subjective and arbitrary. The world around us becomes "real" only as we act on it and interact with it; it is true only when it is (re)realized and co-optated with fiction. All individuals use certain terminologies in translating their environments or realities. As Derek Attridge observes, echoing Derrida,

Literary texts, one might say, are acts of writing that call forth acts of reading: though in saying this, it is important to remain aware of the polysemy of the term act: as both "serious" performance and "staged" performance, as a "proper" doing and an improper or temporary one, as an action, a law governing actions, and a record documenting actions.²²

The continuing representation of the impossibility of representation is to change negation into interrogation. It is an affirmative act of self-criticism. Anna's writing thus becomes, in a sense, what Charles Russell calls the "art of criticism, with no message other than the need for continuous questioning."²³

One of Anna's "questionings" is the search for a metafictional place whence she can speak of literature and its difficulties. In order to "break through the form" of impotent realism, Anna tries to bring realism to its extreme--a kind of over-representation that Allen Thiher calls "hyperrealism."²⁴ In the Blue Notebook she attempts to write down everything, every moment of one particular day "like a cell under a

microscope," neither selecting nor arranging what she records. Through this form of extreme hyperrealism, Anna attempts to use language against itself in order to explore its limitations and possibilities. As Linda Hutcheon observes, "the political, social, and intellectual experience of the 1960s helped make it possible for postmodernism to be seen as what Kristeva calls 'writing-as-experience-of-limits': limits of language, of subjectivity, of sexual identity."²⁵ Anna writes as if she feared her language were neither transparent enough to copy her experience or nor strong enough to reach the solid world. Like Kinbot in Nabokov's Pale Fire, Anna seems to have reached the limits of sanity with language. When the language does not convey anything beyond itself, when it closes upon itself, then the language, in its own self-representation, indicates a condition of madness. Anna's wish to present the weight of the experience in the world seems to be a mad desire to overcome her own vision of how language dissolves the real into irreality. In this way, The Golden Notebook expresses an oblique fear that literature, or other human constructs, will rob man of the world and leave him within the insane vortex of language forever spinning away from the real world.

The view that language is insanely autonomous, as Allen Thiher argues, can elicit paradoxical reactions. On one hand, many writers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Iris Murdoch feel a kind of despair that, because fiction is merely language, it is cut off from a, or the, world. Language can thus be experienced as a form of isolating man from some authentic realm of essential concerns. But this view is challenged by the belief that language's autonomy can also give rise to an often joyous affirmation of fiction's power to define the world and hence reality, as exemplified by the works of William Gass and Alain Robbe-Grillet.²⁶ In The Golden Notebook, we find embodied the paradox of partial belief and partial disbelief with regard to the competing claims of language. Not the least interesting aspect of The Golden Notebook is that the play of Chinese boxes makes it clear simultaneously that language articulates the world and that language does not reach the world. As Hutcheon explains, "this kind of fiction is not only self-reflexively metafictional and parodic, but also makes a claim to some kind of (newly problematized) historical reference. It does not so much deny as contest the 'truths' of reality and fiction."²⁷

Anna, as writer-character, struggles with this paradox, by situating her language problems in a broad social,

political context. Anna discusses with a friend, for instance, her decision to leave the Party, and the reason she explains, interestingly enough, is related to language:

And something happens I get more and more afraid of--words lose their meaning. I can hear Jack and I talking--it seems the words come out from inside me, from some anonymous place--but they don't mean anything. I keep seeing, before my eyes, pictures of what we are talking about--scenes of death, torture, cross-examination and so on; and the words we are using have nothing to do with what I am seeing, they sound like an idiotic gabbling, like mad talk. (314)

When her Communist Writers' Group discuss Stalin on linguistics, Anna contemplates "novels about the breakdown of language, like Finnegans Wake" (272), in which words lose their meaning and seem "like a foreign language. The gap between what they are supposed to mean and what in fact they say seems unbridgeable" (272). Anna parallels her disillusionment with the Communist Party with her increasing doubt about the transparency or translating capacity of language.

Anna, in fact, often thinks that words are insufficient, that she would prefer film which records the subtleties without necessarily being mediated by words. Anna suspects the visual power of words, and rejects the possibility of words "showing" rather than "telling." By rejecting the words' "showing" power, Anna renounces in a sense the traditional

notion that writers can depict something; to use Barthes's terms, Anna's "dream of painting die(s)." ²⁸ Anna first touches on her language crisis in a reflexive comment in the Yellow Notebook:

To show a woman loving a man one should show her cooking a meal for him or opening a bottle of wine for the meal, while she waits for his ring at the door. Or waking in the morning before he does to see his face change from the calm of sleep into a smile of welcome. Yes, to be repeated a thousand times. But that isn't literature. Probably better as a film. Yes, the physical quality of life, that's living, and not the analysis afterwards. (210)

Since the visual power has been lost, words are intimately connected with falsification. Thus, Anna develops a doubt about art's ability to trans(re)late experience faithfully and vividly. Anna records in the Blue and Golden Notebooks her most crucial struggle with herself when she find that words have totally lost their "painting" power for her:

Words, words, I play with words, hoping that some combination, even a chance combination, will say what I want. Perhaps better than music? But music attacks my inner ear like an antagonist, it's not my world. The fact is, the real experience can't be described. (549)

This passage will certainly remind us of William H. Gass's interesting comment on Gertrude Stein's play with words: "Words, of course, were tender buttons, to be sorted and layed with, admired and arranged, and she felt that language in

English literature had become increasingly stiff and resistant, and that words had to be pried out of their formulas, freed, and allowed to regain their former Elizabethan fluidity."²⁹

Inseparable from the problem of expressive power of words are the issues of the verbal representation in relation to memory. In fact, these issues are simply a variation upon the same concern, for memory imposes an unconsciously-created structure on the writer's experience, a pattern which is not necessarily "true" at all. In several places, The Golden Notebook illustrates the difficulty of the artist struggling with the unconscious inaccuracy of her own memory, with the puzzling trans-relation between unconscious chosen memory and historical random facts. As Anna observes, "I am appalled at how much I didn't notice, living inside the subjective highly-coloured mist, how do I know that what I 'remember' was what was important? What I remember was chosen by Anna, of twenty years ago. I don't know what this Anna of now would choose" (135). Clearly, Anna is obsessed not by memory itself, but by the relation between truth and fiction. In fact, a large part of the novel is concerned with Anna's relation to her own first novel, which she now dislikes, feeling it was the product of a mistranslated memory of her life during the war:

I read this over today, for the first time since I wrote it. It's full of nostalgia, every word loaded with it, although at the time I wrote it I thought I was being "objective". Nostalgia for what? I don't know. Because I'd rather die than have to live through any of that again. (150)

In The Golden Notebook, since Anna refuses to reconstruct the real events into story, the reader is offered increasingly simple and raw materials. Anna constantly asks herself, "Why a story at all . . . Why not simply the truth?" She attempts at the factual, the "true fact" in various ingenious ways. She tries to convey "those moments of knowing" to the reader, and to share the "how" as well as the "what" of her art. Anna tries to show the "undecidability" of the word which, as Derrida observes, "is not caused here by some enigmatic equivocality, some inexhaustible ambivalence of a word in a 'natural' language, and still less by some 'Gengensinn der Urworte' ('antithetical sense of primal words')." ³⁰ The novel, in this instance, is a metafictional presentation which is an investigation of the writer herself. This writer attempts to trans(re)late the intangible experience of the tangible world into a representation circumscribed by her own pattern of "knowing." This highly self-conscious effort is not made in vain; it redirects the writer's blocked writing energy on the fictional level, and demonstrates how it works metafictionally.

So far, we have seen the problematization of the trans-relations between fiction and truth, between language and experience, between self-conscious art and life, as illustrated through the juxtaposition of journals and fictions, most often from a self-critical perspective. It seems that Anna's has an ideal of true art, but she is unable to present it. Instead, all she provides is inadequate, mistranslated versions of experience--non-performing narratives. Anna's art, to explain in Damian Grant's terms, fictionalizes reality instead of realizing fiction as nineteenth century literature and Modernism both aimed to do, though in different ways.³¹ The paradox of Anna's writing as a successful failure is, in Graham Clarke's term, to "make and unmake meaning, effect a simultaneous creative surge and destructive will."³² The Golden Notebook can be regarded as a paradigm of Anna's will to de(con)struct the writing process, and re-translate experience. In reading the novel, we gradually realize, to borrow a phrase from Jean Ricardou, "how the novel ceases to be the writing of a story to become the story of a writing."³³

Through the paradoxical Chinese box strategy, Lessing juxtaposes the narratives supposedly fictional with those supposedly factual, and thus highlights the process of trans-

creation, and the relation of literature to life. This contrasting pattern is clearly manifested in the parallel relation between the Blue Notebook (diary) and the Yellow Notebook (fiction). In the Yellow Notebook, The Shadow of the Third tells a love story of Ella and Paul, and contains a metatext in which Ella expresses her reflections on her own writing. From the parallel situation in the Blue and Yellow notebooks and other hints, the reader slowly realizes that the story of Ella and Paul is also the trans-story of Anna and Michael. As a result, the reader starts to read the actual fiction against a possible contemplated reality. The process of trans-reading fictional story into non-fictional reality has broad implications for the spatial systems created by the Chinese box strategy. Since it breaks down our habitual way of experiencing a literary work, The Golden Notebook requires new concepts of apprehension. We must recognize the paradox of reality and realization. If a story or fictional space that is realized in a text, then it should be considered real. If a piece of reality or an "untold world"³⁴ that is merely alluded, but never materialized in a text, then it should be considered unreal. So in addition to the traditional distinction between fiction and reality, we have to differentiate the textual real from ontological real within

the narrative. But in postmodern Chinese box fiction, the textual real and the ontological real may be intertwined, not always clear-cut. In The Golden Notebook, for instance, the issue of "textual real vs. ontological real" is only a play of "figure vs. ground reversal," which depends on readers' perspectives. One purpose of the Chinese box strategy is to challenge us to compare and to judge the two or more realities, presented adjacently and ambiguously. The play of ambiguity entails more than narrative density: it often brings into focus a wide range of epistemological aporia and ontological conundrums. So, the reader is forced to acknowledge that he will never know exactly what reality underlying the Yellow Notebook account is and what kind of trans-relation between fiction and reality is in The Golden Notebook.

This particular ambiguous use of fiction within fiction and reality within fiction is an elaborate device for making a statement about the artist's interfacial relation to her characters in reflexive fiction: author and character are, in Lucien Dallenbach's term, "twinning," or "narcissistic doubling";³⁵ but they also separate from each other. As Dallenbach explains in his discussion of André Gide, "The reflexive language of writing, exalted by the reflected image

of the writer; the mirror of his early years recalling the first fusion of body and language: what we have here is doubtless a typical reappropriation scenario, which only a psychoanalyst could interpret fully."³⁶ In The Golden Notebook, Lessing creates Anna who comments on both the closeness and distance between herself and Ella. The nature of their relationship is questioned implicitly by the structure of the novel. In other words, there are some points in common between Anna's experiences as recorded in the Blue Notebook and their transformation into stories in the Yellow one. Sometimes the confusion of the two characters, Anna and Ella, is consciously marked and re-marked, not only in terms of trans(re)lated experience but also in terms of textuality--for instance, the metatext in the Yellow Notebook and the dream narrative in the Golden Notebook. The confusion suggests that the borderlines between the various narrative levels, between the text and "the texts within the text," are obliterated. The Chinese box strategy, which continually and pointedly de(con)structs and undercuts its own multi-level systems against the grain of the traditional operations, involves self-conscious mode of deflating reader expectations. The novel is configured in such a way as to blur the distinction between the textual real and the ontological real.

We as readers are not only told that the "twinning" or "narcissistic doubling" trans-relation between author and character is mysterious and undecipherable, but we are also made to experience that awareness.

The Chinese box strategy is also a challenge to the conventional artistic limitations, a critique of the linear plot structure and time sequence that belie the process of creating total lived experience. As we should notice, the heterarchical organization of the notebooks is significant. For instance, the last Yellow Notebook contains a series of paragraphs, and each is preceded by an asterisk, a number, and then a short heading such as "A Short Story" or "A Short Novel" (467-473). All of the story or novel sketches, which are mainly about a man-woman relationship, are "realized" in the final section of the Blue Notebook which records Anna's affair with Saul Green. Certain scenes or incidents in Anna's description of the affair indicated by asterisks and numbers that "flashforward," referring to the story sketches in the Yellow Notebook. Thus, in addition to the sense of déjà vu, the reader also has a parallax feeling that the fiction is translated into real life, the fictional account of man-woman relationship is trans-related into the actual affair of Anna and Saul Green.

Confused readers would like to ask what the point of all this is. Referring to the process of making connections or deciding how to fill the gaps of a text, Wolfgang Iser remarks, "With 'traditional' texts this process was more or less unconscious, but modern texts frequently exploit it quite deliberately. They are often so fragmented that one's attention is almost exclusively occupied with the search for connections between the fragments."³⁷ This effort required from the reader is to recognize that these trans-related, cross-referential Chinese boxes are meant to demonstrate some relationships and interactions. First of all, what is the relationship between the fiction and the non-totalizable reality? What, in turn, does this relationship tell us about creativity and textuality? Sometimes Anna imagines a story and then translates it into reality; sometimes she writes her real experience into a fiction. The two processes are not quite clearly distinct, because writers write about fiction and their experience in a similar way--they observe, analyze, and translate a certain aspect of reality, both textual and ontological, which fits the conditions of their perception screen. The various human made versions of the unrepresentable Reality which lies somewhere beyond human grasp, however, give

us various perspectives and opportunities to approach the ultimacy, fictional or real.

The various versions also complement one another. For instance, the Yellow Notebook plot schemes give a kind of heightened critical perspective on the emotionally-loaded and generally more amorphous material in the Blue Notebook, especially since the latter becomes a record of Anna's emotional disintegration and Anna's own view sometimes becomes confused and unreliable. Both kinds of "telling" of the same story essentially comment on each other and highlight each other's limitations. A suggestive parallel can be drawn, in fact, between the function of the two notebooks here and the layering quality provided in Gilbert Sorrentino's Mulligan Stew by the conflicts between author's stories and character's journals commenting on the author's writing, both of which complement each other and broaden the significance of the novel. If what the Blue Notebook renders is a chaotic, ontological reality, what the Yellow Notebook presents is an overly organized textual reality. Both of them together, however, provided multiple perspectives on the same actions. This cross-reference evokes a situation of narrative "self-contextualization," or self-interpretation, because it forces the text constantly to "recontextualize" or re-interpret

itself.³⁸ Such cross-reference allows the reader to "recontextualize" the meaning of the events and actions, and also allows Lessing to portray the emotional intellectual schizophrenia which troubled Anna in her self-conscious attempt to record her life. The Blue Notebook entry records the "unself-conscious" re-experiencing of the situation; the story outline suggests an intellectually-perceived pattern beneath the confusion of the experience.

More startling than these explicit cross-referential Chinese boxes is a web of what R. Wilson calls "interplay" between Anna and her creation: "An embedded narrative . . . breaks the time scheme of the narrative that incorporates it. It opens a fissure in the narrative order of the text that, whether one thinks of this sequence as chronological or as radically perturbed, . . . introduces a different time scheme into the narrative."³⁹ If we assume, as we are apparently meant to, that the last section of the Yellow Notebook, which includes the stories with asterisks, is contemporaneous with the last section of the Blue Notebook, then we are troubled when we realize that the penultimate section of the Yellow Notebook "breaks the time scheme of the narrative" and "opens a fissure in the narrative order." Many of the stories which are attributed to Ella in fiction happen to Anna later on in

"reality." The effect is the same as Lucien Dallenbach observes when reading "The Murder of Gonzago" in Hamlet: "'the play within the play' reflects not only the events prior to the beginning of the play, but also future events."⁴⁰ But how does one account for the fact that Anna's alter-ego character has ideas for stories which later turn out to be "real" experiences that Anna has? Can we see this prefiguring as an example of that almost magical intuition which Anna feels she has when she is writing? The point that Lessing seems to be emphasizing here is that narrative is not simply a recording of experiences that have already passed, it is also an imaginative projection which Anna, for example, must live out or translate into her life. Her narrative and her imagination make her understand her own possibilities, both positive and negative, before she experiences them. Her narrative is a prefigured, pre-translated reality. Similarly, we see at other points that narratives may be a means of projecting fantasies, ideas or attitudes onto a character to try them out. By the strategy of the Chinese box, Lessing achieves a simultaneity of perspectives. Fictions and realities of different levels throw light upon one another, illumine, and trans(re)late one another.

To summarize, the preceding discussion indicates part of the rationale for the Chinese box strategy in The Golden Notebook. Lessing shares with other historiographic metafictionists the need to expand and alter the forms of the traditional as well as modernist novels in order to achieve a totality ensuing from the reader's apprehension of fragments and apparently unrelated narrative boxes through a trans-relation--that is, they overlap and interface, as suggested by the interplay amongst narrative boxes. As Derrida observes,

We touch here on one of the most difficult points of this whole problematic: when we must recover language without language, language beyond language, this interplay of forces which are mute but already haunted by writing, where the conditions of a performative are established, as are the rules of the game and the limits of subversion.⁴¹

Lessing's expansion, which relies upon the spatial and temporal subtleties of the Chinese box strategy, characterizes a re-centralizable form that has the ability to break through itself to encounter, to recontextualize and re-trans(re)late contemporary experience in a self-conscious process.

II

A book which does not contain its
counter-book is considered
incomplete.

Jorge Luis Borges

Labyrinths⁴²

The Free Women sections of The Golden Notebook form a puzzle for most readers. This clumsy and old-fashioned novel within the novel, written in the omniscient third person, seems to tell the same story as the notebooks, but also diverges from the latter in several significant ways, and thus forms a kind of counter-book or countersign in this novel. The reaction and counteraction between Free Women and the novel as a whole set up an opposition, as Patricia Waugh argues in her discussion of metafiction, not to "ostensibly 'objective'

facts in the 'real' world, but the language of the realistic novel which has sustained and endorsed such a view of reality."⁴³ So the inclusion of the counter-book eventually leads us to the issue of the Chinese box strategy of The Golden Notebook and the resolution it proposes for the quandaries of a novelist like Anna Wulf and Doris Lessing.

Most critics agree that Free Women is a fictional creation of Anna's in which she attempts to present in traditional narrative form the complex of experience which is formed by all of the notebooks taken together. Thus Free Women is not a piece of ontological reality, to which we compare other fictions inside the novel; it is another fiction within fiction and serves as complement and contrast to the journals; however, the journals themselves, as Anna constantly reminds us, are only partially successful approximations, so the fiction Free Women can only be an approximation of approximations. Free Women, however, has several characteristics which separate it from other narrative boxes in the novel. It is more highly dramatized, organized and linear than the rest. Strictly speaking, its re-presentation are more externally descriptive but less performative than those of the notebooks. Moreover, the contrast between the profuse, multilinked material of the notebooks and the simple,

rectilinear representation in Free Women highlights the pallidness and rigidness of the latter. Free Women is overly dramatic and psychologically more superficial than all of the notebooks. The inclusion of two kinds of discourses of one story in a single book produces an "internal dialogism" that Mikhail Bakhtin would deem the foundation of novelistic polyphony.⁴⁴

Many critics emphasizes the section of Free Women as the sign of Anna's overcoming her writer's block. As Patrocínio Schweichart observes, "In return for Anna's gift, Saul gives her the first sentence of her next novel: 'The two women were alone in the London flat.' Because this is the first sentence of Free Women (the novel within The Golden Notebook), we realize that it is Anna's second novel, the sign that she ultimately overcomes her writer's block."⁴⁵ It is true that Anna is the author of Free Women, but this fiction within fiction can be regarded neither as a psychological cure nor artistic accomplishment for its author. Instead, as a counter-book, Free Women highlights the interactive discourse of a postmodern Chinese box novel. As I have mentioned earlier, The Golden Notebook turns on itself in a kind of circular pattern in re-trans-relation of Anna's experience. The penultimate section of the novel (the Golden Notebook) concludes indeed

with the suggestion that Anna will overcome her writer's block and write the novel entitled Free Women. Nevertheless, Free Women section 5 ironically re-concludes with Molly making a compromise marriage and Anna taking up social work, an ironic re-conclusion in view of the issues with which the women deal. It seems that the ironic re-conclusion of Free Women counteracts the conclusion of the Golden Notebook. The function of Free Women can be explained by Jacques Derrida's concept of "re-mark." Derek Attridge says:

Whenever the text signals its own status as writing, as literature, as a member of a specific genre, it does so by means of a mark which is necessarily marked in advance as a mark--by what Derrida calls the "re-mark." This is not a self-reflection nor a classical mise-en-abyme (as in the inclusion within a heraldic shield of a small representation of itself), but a moment at which the categories of form and content, inside and outside, break down.⁴⁶

If Anna writes again something like Free Women, it is because she attempts to "re-mark" the limitation of realism which she tried hard to subvert throughout the novel. Such a counter re-mark as revealed in the double (re)conclusions in The Golden Notebook is characteristic of the Chinese box strategy, for it is basically a successive acts of resignification, a self-critical discourse which "uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges." These contradictory mark and re-mark are positioned within the work,

as Hutcheon has pointed out, "to call attention to both what is being contested and what is being offered as a critical response to that, and to do so in a self-aware way that admits its own provisionality."⁴⁷

According to Lessing, to re-mark the inferior quality of Free Women is not only intentional, but also of central importance in The Golden Notebook. As Lessing says, she wants

to write a short formal novel which would enclose the rest in order to suggest what I think a great many writers feel about the formal novel; namely, that it's not doing its job any more. So I thought the only way to do this would be to write the short formal novel and put in the experience it came out of, showing how ridiculous the formal novel is when it can't say a damned thing . . . So I put in the short formal novel and all this.⁴⁸

Lessing also explains that she has included the short novel Free Women "as a summary and condensation of all that mass of material [in order] to say something about the conventional novel, another way of describing the dissatisfaction of a writer when something is finished: 'How little I have managed to say of the truth, how little I have caught of all that complexity; how can this small neat thing be true when what I experienced was so rough and apparently formless and unshaped?'. "⁴⁹ Here, I think, we hit upon a sort of Barthesian "enigma" in The Golden Notebook.⁵⁰ The crucial "enigma" centres around the reaction and counteraction between

Free Women and the notebooks. As I mentioned earlier, certain solutions to issues in the novel seem to contradict each other. This is equally true of the two novels which Lessing has brought together into one. For, on the one hand, Lessing is writing a criticism of the conventional formal novel, embodied in a metatext in The Golden Notebook; on the other hand, The Golden Notebook is much concerned with Anna's overcoming her writer's block. Although Lessing is foggy about this, she seems to suggest that the un-translatable, self-transgressive experience of madness sublimizes Anna. The paradox between a form-breaking madness and a rational acceptance of the necessity to "preserve the forms," to "create patterns" (549) makes Anna realize both her self-limitation and self-transgression. She re-marks her small part of all of the human experience and this allows her to write Free Women. But this "moderate" and "inadequate" novel is not a solution to the crucial problems of representation Anna deals with, since the text about the writer's block and the text of criticism are pulling in different directions.

The short formal novel, as a counter-book within the book, is a fictional system which has a logic of its own; it diverges gradually and markedly from the experience recorded in the notebooks. So Anna, who in the notebooks escapes from

her block and goes on to write, is strongly contrasted to the Anna of Free Women, who becomes a social worker with no desire to write again. The point here is that Lessing has chosen, as she clearly states, to point up the limitations of the traditional novel. The question which arises from the discrepancy between reality and the fiction which is supposed to contain it is related to the counter-discourses in the novel. It seems that Lessing has purposely set up her own straw man for her metafictional dialogue. So the sections of Free Women with their "realistic" irreality are trans-related to works whose textual non-performance, by calling attention to themselves as form, thwarts a representational rationale. Within this context, we can see clearly Free Women as a self-parody. Lessing's parody, needless to say, is distinguished from the traditional parody; it is what Fredric Jameson would like to call "blank parody" or "pastiche," a special kind of parody in postmodern writing, which is divorced from discursive norms, lacks traditional parody's "ulterior motives" and seems "devoid of laughter."⁵¹

To discuss the Free Women's dimension as self-parody, we need a larger context, a larger box than The Golden Notebook-- Lessing's oeuvre. The relation between The Golden Notebook and Lessing's oeuvre has been discussed by some critics. Roberta

Rubenstein, for example, sounds convincing when she argues that The Golden Notebook, "the first and most significant of her experimental fictions, marks a qualitative change in the author's oeuvre. Her own intentional attempt to depart from conventional narrative structure is itself one of the novel's central issues."⁵² What The Golden Notebook actually demonstrates, according to Rubenstein, is Lessing's attempt to present a reflexive metatext on the traditional models she used for her earlier works. In The Golden Notebook, Lessing is doing something that John Barth does in Lost in the Funhouse: that is, indulging in a kind of self-satire, a parody of her own styles and works such as her earlier Martha Quest novels. It seems that some of the stuff in The Golden Notebook are re-translated versions of the same stuff treated in The Children of Violence. The Free Women sections, which are supposed to be a straw-man of the kind of novels Lessing has written earlier, are a inner text in Lessing's self-parody, and their inclusion serves to draw attention to the superior quality of the new type of novel represented by The Golden Notebook. Lessing does not parody the conventional novel in a straightforward way; rather, she uses a complex strategy to manipulate the essentially traditional materials that were for many years the sources of her work and thus to illustrate her sense of

development from her previously chosen form. Linda Hutcheon, in her discussion of parody, describes the point quite accurately: "To parody is not to destroy the past; in fact to parody is both to enshrine the past and to question it. And this, once again, is the postmodern paradox."⁵³

In The Golden Notebook, what is both instated and then subverted is the notion of a narrative as a closed autonomous entity deriving its unity from the inner interrelations of its parts. The novel both asserts and then undercuts this view, moving from aesthetic text to the context of the world. As Lynn Sucknick points out, "For although The Golden Notebook is experimental in shape, it is realistic and conventional in texture, syntax and incident, and plays on the same responses a realistic novel might elicit."⁵⁴ However, it has been a contemporary critical truism that realism is a set of conventions, and that representation of the real is not the same as the real itself. What The Golden Notebook challenges is both the naive conventional concept of representation and the equally naive assertions of the total separation of art from the world. In The Golden Notebook, Lessing's emphasis is no longer laid on depicting the ontological real, but rather on the textual real--the metafictional problems, such as how to re-represent the efforts to represent reality. As a result,

her creative preference has shifted strikingly from physical "geography"--Rhodesia, South Africa or London--to the artistic "geometry"--the form and configuration that are supposed to represent the world.

William H. Gass once said: "We are all familiar with the kind of kaleidoscope which has no colored chips, itself, to shuffle about, but contains in its tube only mirrors and an eye-piece through which any aspect of the world is shattered and rearranged according to a new geometry."⁵⁵ Lessing's interest in playing with geometry is evident in the "shattered" structure of The Golden Notebook, a true kaleidoscopic novel. As Lessing declares, "The point of that book was the relation of its parts to each other." We have seen that the novel is elaborately configured with alternate voices and styles appearing and reappearing. We have seen that each voice represents a part of Anna, but it only partially explains the structure of the work. One question remains to be answered: Why, instead of being presented together in its entirety, do the sections of Free Women alternate with other notebooks repeatedly? The question can best be answered in terms of the Chinese box strategy. The structure of the novel is clearly related to the impression it deliberately creates, that is, confusion, fragmentation, non-linearity,

consternation, a sense of the inability to draw a clear line between the reality and fiction, and the effort to represent an "aspect of the world" that "is shattered." Such an arrangement can be regarded as a foregrounding technique like that which the collage painters employ in observing reality by focusing on the geometric shapes of objects; it also exposes the artificiality of the words that describe the world. In other words, The Golden Notebook manifests Lessing's self-conscious turning toward the form of the act of writing itself; but it is much more than that: it goes so far as to question its relation with the world beyond itself.

Through the geometry of notebooks and fictions, through the Chinese box of flashbacks, stories and journals, The Golden Notebook achieves a "trompe-l'oeil effect": the reader is "encourage(d) to mistake nested representations for 'realities'."⁵⁶ In the Golden Notebook we learn that Free Women is merely a fiction within the fiction, rather than an account of "real" events. But if Free Women does not provide us with an authentic version of reality, neither can we expect the notebooks to do so, since they are fragmentary and admittedly distorted writing exercises. It seems that there is no objective record or privileged translation in the novel. It is impossible, within this context, to draw a line between

fact and fantasy, between reality and fiction. "Reality thus comes to be understood as a complex interplay of objective experience and the subjective ordering of that experience by the artist. Life and art are seen as a single unit impossible to split."⁵⁷ To put it another way, it appears that "Anna Wulf" is a fictional character invented by herself. This effect can be traced to the notebooks, where the transgression of levels occurs. The notebooks are contained within the "re-marked" frame story--that is to say, they appear to be consistent with the fictional world described by Free Women--and, at same time, they are outside the world, forming an independent record which differs in important respects from the narrative presented in the short novel.

Another aspect of the novel's Chinese box strategy has to do with setting up the reader's expectations in a counter discourse that demolishes them. At several points in the different notebooks, one is given a version of Anna's experience and tempted to accept it as fact before Anna suddenly demolishes the comfortable position by indicating at the end of the account that it is inaccurate and untrue. This calculated, "belated" illumination forces one constantly to reassess one's position, to resignify the words that represent experiences. The pattern of "discourse vs. counter-discourse"

and "mark vs. re-mark" appears repeatedly in the story about Mashopi, in the blue notebooks, and in The Shadow of the Third. The reader can never get to the heart of the matter. This effect is similar to that of Michael Joyce's hypertext fiction Afternoon, in which we are led through a series of presentations and interpretations, with each review providing a totally new perspective, and each rearrangement producing a different story. As Roberta Rubenstein observes, "The meaning of The Golden Notebook, then, is not in any single version of events but in the composite, apprehended through the novel's unique design as well as its substance. Subjectivity becomes total, as the real author steps further back to underscore the reality of fiction: that experience must be 'falsified' in the very act of trying to articulate its truth."⁵⁸

The web of the representations, with all of its confusion and transgression between fiction and reality, re-marks the mysteriousness of the creative act--as it were, illustrating its complexity. One of the things that are so intriguing about The Golden Notebook is that it helps us see how we come through a complicated mental and psychological process to an entirely new story made up of the same narrative materials that echoing one another. For example, the story of Saul Green echoes vaguely certain historic facts and fictional sequences

that Anna told earlier in the Red Notebook and elsewhere. But when we search back through the text to locate the echoing origin, we find it is an impossible task, because the origin is only a paradoxical mirror hall of trans-relations. Through this adept manipulation of allusion and echo, Lessing illustrates the complex nature of trans-creation, which is a matter of immediate insight and the complex of a writer's total past experience. By providing this kind of interwoven structure--a multilink system, Lessing manages to intimate the intricacy of the experience that goes into the work of art and the way it is transformed and translated by the mental and psychological life of the person who is writing it.

The point, of course, is that the elaborate web of relationships which Lessing weaves and that she requires us to decipher, is a paradigm of the complex ways in which narrative, history, theory and experience are related to each other. The Golden Notebook constantly challenges various preoccupations of the novel, providing the reader with multiple ways to re-mark and to re-interpret the previously established interrelations and meanings. From a broader perspective, we can see, postmodern Chinese box fiction is a text that foregrounds its textual labyrinth, while calling upon the reader to find and even produce a rational way to its

meaningful centre. We can trace echoes, patterns, interactions, and relationships, yet often the entire schema seems to escape our grasp; sometimes the material in a story seems to us both familiar and strange, and we try to piece together the elements which, drawn from various parts of the structure, constituted that trans-creative process involved in our gathering, linking, analyzing and sharing textual information. We find that we can trace it to some extent, but the immensity of the task often daunts us. This pseudo creative experience gives us the proper perspective on an analysis of the trans-creative process--we cannot find any origin(ality), but only echoes, mirrors, and translations.

When talking about the contradiction and confusion of The Golden Notebook, we should not forget that the "eye-piece" of the novel is Anna Wulf. It is through her point-of-view that we are to experience life, to perceive chaos, to be confused. In the penultimate section of the novel, which entitled the Golden Notebook, the complex heterarchical narrative recreate a quality of reverie world where chronology and anachronology are tangled, fiction and reality are bleared, experience and expression are confused, and madness and sanity are blended. In such a dislocated condition, Anna experiences a kind of creative liberation, escaping from the claustrophobic limits

of her own subjectivity. She has complained about her own inability to write truthfully until she comes into the Golden Notebook, where she dreams of her past life in the form of a reverie that makes Anna perceive what she fails to see before--the fusion and confusion of narrativity and reality.

This realization that the relation of narrative to reality is a matter of mediation somehow triggers off a kind of inspiration in Anna which allows her to begin writing again. She recognizes that in order to create she must re-mark her liminality and turn liminality into illimitability. But Free Women is not a resolution: it is a metatext of the traditional novelist's dilemma--it represents the traditional novel and points out its inadequacies in the representation of the complex of experience. What, then, is the alternative? The Golden Notebook itself presents an answer to that question. The entire work with the play of Chinese boxes, made up of all of the trans-related notebooks, stories and commentaries, offers itself as an alternative to the traditional novel. Beyond the notion of The Golden Notebook as a resolution to certain novelistic dilemmas, however, is the rich reality that the novel invokes with simultaneity and fragmentation. The point is that the individual inner narrative boxes, which are constantly adjudged to be failures,

are in striking contrast to the complexly woven textual heterarchy of The Golden Notebook as a whole: through this strategy, Lessing suggests that reality is unrepresentable and non-totalizable. The Golden Notebook does not, of course, succeed in presenting the truth of experience or the total reality of the world. But through the Chinese box strategy, we are presented with a convincing analogy. The various totalizable inner narrative boxes, whether it be Shadow of the Third, Free Women or a journal entry, are to the total complexity of The Golden Notebook, as the latter is to the incomparably rich and chaotic reality which Anna attempts to encompass in her fiction. Simultaneously, then, The Golden Notebook manages to offer itself as an alternative to the conventional novel with acknowledge partiality. In an apparent paradox, The Golden Notebook is made to appear superior to conventional fictions, and yet to denigrate itself in preference to a reality it can only adumbrate. It depicts a true artist's brave efforts in presenting various totalizable texts against a non-totalizable reality.

Such an effort is admirable even at the moment when we are no longer bound by external forms, even though we still depend on them and accept that dependence. The Golden Notebook itself is a symbol of this condition, in that it presents a

series of well-made inner textual boxes, but embeds them in a larger box which is embedded in still larger and larger boxes whose boundaries defy analysis. Narrative of this kind could be considered an exemplification, within the limits of a book, of certain paradoxical characteristics of postmodern Chinese box narratives, which direct us beyond The Golden Notebook to a larger box--the non-totalizable Reality. The reflexive textual heterarchy suggests a kind of narrative ventriloquism of history that contains "countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference."⁵⁹

If literary texts, as Terry Eagleton believes, are always "deeply historical," The Golden Notebook can be regarded as an example of the historiographic metafiction that is historically ventriloquial. It does not display the "great turbulence and antagonism of historically determined discourses,"⁶⁰ rather, it mediates between histories and History, between texts and Text, between experiences and Experience. As Charles Russell has pointed out, such an "artwork simultaneously casts light on the workings of aesthetic conceptualization and on art's sociological situation."⁶¹ The socio-historical concerns which are so much a part of Lessing's life and of her fictions exhibit a paradoxical relation between fiction and a socio-historio-

political context. The use of the Chinese box strategy to recontextualize experience, to resignify history, to retrans(re)late fiction, and to re-mark reality, therefore, is essentially connected to Lessing's admirable efforts to "(re)present the un(re)presentable."

CHAPTER TWO

Lost in the Funhouse:

John Barth's Chinese Box

A well-constructed, artistically successful work of fiction has its formal interests as well as its substantial interests, and each becomes a metaphor for each other.

John Barth¹

Anxiety for originality is a postmodern syndrome. Manifested in a variety of ways, a pervasive symptom exists amongst novelists is the sense of depletion concerning the sort of fiction they write and its possible repetition of the past. As John Barth says in "The Literature of Exhaustion," discussing Jorge Luis Borges,

for one to attempt to add overtly to the sum of "original" literature by even so much as a conventional short story, not to mention a novel, would be too presumptuous, too naive; literature has been done long since. . . . His ficciones are not only footnotes to imaginary texts, but postscripts to the real corpus of literature.²

The problem Barth perceives is a state of exhaustion or "kaputness"³ in contemporary literature. "What does one do when all the stories are told?" "How does one cope with the used-upness of forms?" One possibility, as Lost in the Funhouse demonstrates, is to turn exhaustion of old literary modes into replenishment of a new form, and to acknowledge old stories by "iterating" or "re-marking" them in new and imaginative ways, thereby recreating one's "original" precursors.

"About narrative writing," Barth says, "I have mixed feelings":

Contemporary writers can't go on doing what's been done, and done better. I revere Flaubert and Tolstoy, Hemingway and Faulkner; but they're finished as objects of interest to the writer. My God, we're living in the last third of the twentieth century. We can't write nineteenth-century novels.

Joyce and Kafka bring the novel to one kind of conclusion. So do Beckett and Borges. From both, I get pure esthetic bliss. It's an esthetic of silence. Beckett is moving toward silence, refining language out of existence, working toward the point where there's nothing more to say. And Borges writes as if literature had already been done and he's writing footnotes to imaginary texts.

But my temperament is entirely different. The future of the novel is dubious. OK. So I start with the premise of the "end of literature" and try turn it against itself. I go back to Cervantes, Fielding, Sterne, the Arabian Nights, to the artificial frame and the long connected tales. I am interested in the artifices of narrative, in what can be done with language.⁴

Lost in the Funhouse, in its brilliant conception and performance, dramatizes Barth's energetic attempt to trans-relate into a flexible postmodern "long connected tale" the different novelistic modes--realistic/metonymic/mimetic and auto-reflexive/metaphoric/poetic, and thereby to rejuvenate the "exhausted" or "kaput" literature. Blurring the traditional oppositions, such as pure and impure, free and fixed, new and old, fluid and rigid, Barth tries to shift his novel from the traditional notion of imagination as invention to a new concept of imagination as iteration. With this shift, the old myth of originality is challenged; his novel relinquishes the anaemic encumbrances of the past and accepts the challenge to confront the "end of literature."

At first glance, Lost in the Funhouse, "the long connected tale," does not look connected or unified in any way: it seems to be a collection of short stories and short fragments, but the inner narrative boxes are presented as a "series . . . meant to be received 'all at once'"⁵ and to be read as a single text. Many early studies regarded the work

as a collection of short stories, based on the fact that some of the short pieces in this book have appeared in magazines as "short stories"; therefore, they attempt to situate it in the tradition of Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio, Williams's In the American Grain, and Faulkner's Go Down, Moses. Later on, the complicated interrelation amongst the inner narratives in the book has been attested by the studies of critics such as Michael Hinden, Gerald Gillespie and Beverly Gray Bienstock,⁶ but critics still hesitate to name it a "novel," probably because the standard of the novel genre is too narrow to legitimize such a strange miscellany of stories. In a recent study of John Barth's work, Heide Ziegler cautiously calls Lost in the Funhouse something "between the novel and the short-story genres."⁷ This situation reminds us of James Joyce's Ulysses, which many critics refused to accept as a novel when it first appeared on the literary horizon. In response to claims that Joyce's work transgresses the boundary of the novel genre, T.S. Eliot wrote: "If [Ulysses] is not a novel, that is simply because the novel, instead of being a form, was simply the expression of an age which had not sufficiently lost all form to feel the need of something stricter."⁸

Actually, Barth's "connected tale" iterates a long tradition of open book. As Jay David Bolter observes,

This strict requirement of unity and homogeneity is relatively recent. In the Middle Ages, unrelated texts were often bound together, and texts were often added in the available space in a volume years or decades later. Even in the early centuries of printing, it was not unusual to put unrelated works between two covers.⁹

In the era of postmodernism, the "strict requirement of unity and homogeneity" is challenged, while the principle of "trans-relatedness" is iterated. Accordingly, in spite of a certain feature of "unrelatedness," I would like to treat Lost in the Funhouse as a novel, a novel with a Chinese box strategy, a novel that challenges the category of traditional novel genre. Just as the other Chinese box novels may be comprised of journals, letters, poems, comments, notes, medical reports, or historical sketches, Lost in the Funhouse is a novel made up of trans-related short narratives, which are in themselves textual boxes composed of smaller ones, participate in a larger frame box. When Barth presents the heterarchical configuration of stories within the frame of the Moebius strip, he blurs the distinction between part and whole, trans-relating narrative levels. Although Lost in the Funhouse moves from story to story, changing character and situation, the various inner narrative boxes are linked by the encompassing

principle of the Chinese box strategy, which assembles a set of narratives in a relation both of discontinuity and of continuity so that the reader is required to perform successive acts of resignification and recontextualization of previously established meanings.

Although Barth ironically calls Lost in the Funhouse a "series," it does not operate along a linear sequence, because all the trans-related inner narrative boxes can be neither conjoined smoothly nor considered as separate entities from the reader's perspective. The result is an "undecidable" tension between coherence and fragmentation. As Jacques Derrida observes,

Here the undecidability is no longer attached to a multiplicity of meanings, to a metaphorical richness, to a system of correspondences. Something takes place, something "more" or "less," as one likes, in any case the angel of a certain re-mark, which prevents polysemy from having its horizon.¹⁰

The Chinese box strategy installs a new internal multilink system in narrative--that is, the reader will experience the text as a concatenation of narratives and also as a spatial movement, a narrative dialogue or "correspondence." The temporal and spatial component of the process of experiencing a text is thus confused and greatly amplified. As "Frame-Tale" creates an infinite frame for the inner stories, the Moebius strip as a metaphor for story-iterating emphasizes the work's

philosophy of "re-marking" narrative regeneration--"telling the story over as though it were another's until like a much-repeated word it loses sense" (98)--that is the answer to the "exhaustion" of literature. Thus, like the Moebius strip, Lost in the Funhouse, beginning and ending within a paradox of iteration, becomes a hypertext of continuity, integrating various narrative boxes in its endlessness. The book as a whole avoids any linear chronology by constantly re-saturating and re-translating itself.

If we look to certain technical considerations, the various narrative boxes in Lost in the Funhouse can be meaningfully trans-related in different ways. As Jurij Lotman points out in The Structure of the Artistic Texts, "Juxtaposed units that are incompatible in one system force the reader to construct an additional structure in which the incompatibility is eliminated."¹¹ Enlightened by the hints offered by Barth on several occasions, critics vie with one another in putting forward different "additional structures" for the book which they thought "incompatible" among its parts. According to Jan Marta, the fourteen stories the book contains fall into "two sub-texts, consisting of the first seven stories and the second seven respectively."¹² Steven M. Bell suggests that the various narrative boxes can be divided "into three groups:

allegories, self-referential fictions, and myths rewritten."¹³ Heide Ziegler's study shows that the book consists of "the realistically written stories," "the 'spoken' texts" and the "metric prose."¹⁴ Almost every critic has his or her own individual way of grouping the stories; and there is no point in arguing which "additional structure" is right or authentic. Since it is unnecessary to muddle the already confusing criticism of Lost in the Funhouse with more fantastic "additional structures," I will approach this novel in a different way to demonstrate that the "incompatible units" are actually indissolubly trans-related in a state of compatibility or co-optation produced by the Chinese box strategy and that the fun of this book comes just from its possibility of innumerable ways of rearrangements. It is an artistic game created by Barth through the Chinese box strategy and played by readers.

Certainly, it is not an easy game, for Lost in the Funhouse has always been classified by critics and readers among the most baffling books in the world. As Edgar H. Knapp advises:

Warning. You cannot read Lost in the Funhouse simply for the fun of it. Read it three times: once, to get knocked off your balance; and then to be knocked down again. Perhaps a fourth time . . . for the fun of it.¹⁵

But when we get up from the ground "a fourth time," what we find in the "funhouse" is not funny at all, yet something serious under the playfulness--a painful critical exploration and metafictional inquiry. Barth never regards himself merely as a "formalist" joker and never considers his own work as a pure formal "funhouse" or "lexical playfield." As he said in an interview with Loretta M Lampkin,

A well-constructed, artistically successful work of fiction has its formal interests as well as its substantial interests, and each becomes a metaphor for the other.¹⁶

And these "substantial interests," as well as their metaphoric relation to the "formal interests," are the starting point of my discussion of Lost in the Funhouse.

I

The writer enters into a reflective and reflexive relationship with the writing page, a relationship in which thoughts are bodied forth. It becomes difficult to say where thinking ends and writing begins, where the mind ends and the writing space begins.

Jay David Bolter

Writing Space¹⁷

Reviewing through the existing criticism of John Barth's work, we find that the dominant critical approach has focused on the play of language in his work and consequently has obscured the double nature of his fiction--that is, the tension between Barth's "formal" and "substantial" interests. This approach is helpful in drawing our attention to some of the glaring features of Bath's fiction; however, it

concentrates too narrowly on Barth's "linguistic nihilism,"¹⁸ ignoring the double discourse in his novel--the interaction between mimetic/metonymic and poetic/metaphoric discourses--which is reflected on the linguistic level as the tension between reference and auto-reference and on the narrative level as the co-optation between life and art. It is true that Lost in the Funhouse calls the dogmas of representation into question and consequently disturbs the linguistic discourse by which the realists articulate their experience of the world; but, paradoxically, since story-(re)telling is itself an act of signification which attempts to re-mark language as signifying practice and as a production of meanings, it can be seen as a substantial endeavour to use language against itself in order to explore the new possibilities of literature. Therefore, the tension between reference and auto-reference indicates an alternative means of expression to break nihilistic infecundity. If the novel's overt artificiality, "linguistic nihilism" and "nonprogressive mutterings"¹⁹ express doubt about the language's capacity for representation, the novel itself, through its layer upon layer of associations and dissociations, re-marks a form of self-exploration in which the substantial endeavour to accomplish a "well-constructed, artistically successful work" is affirmed.

In "The Literature of Exhaustion," Barth expresses his confidence in authors who "represent not life directly but a representation of life": "In fact such works are not more removed from 'life' than Richardson's or Goethe's epistolary novels are; both imitate 'real' documents, and the subject of both, ultimately, is life, not documents."²⁰ In several of his "Friday Book" pieces, Barth reiterates his argument. In "Historical Fiction, Fictitious History, and Chesapeake Bay Blue Crabs, or About Aboutness," for instance, Barth says:

It is that the true subject of literature is not the events of history or the features of a particular place, but "the experience of human life, its happiness and its misery". . . the passions of the human breast and the possibilities of human language.²¹

In his introduction to "Tales Within Tales Within Tales," Barth says again that "the proper subject of literature" is "human life, its happiness and its misery."²² Barth's emphatic reiteration of "human life" and "the passions of the human breast" in literature highlights some previously unnoticed features of his novel, and offers a clue to its socio-historio-cultural significance. Barth's text, in fact, manifests a serious human concern not only with itself auto-reflexively, but also with man, life and history in their full sense. In a sense, Lost in the Funhouse can be regarded as the kind of novel that Michael Butor has labelled as "the Novel as

Research"--the novel acts as "the laboratory of narrative."²³ According to Butor, this sort of novel is an agent of the writer's inquiry and his primary tool in apprehending not only his own art, but also the "life" in it.

"People still lead lives," as Lost in the Funhouse declares, "people still fall in love, and out" (113):

they please each other, and hurt each other, isn't that the truth, and they do these things in more or less conventionally dramatic fashion, unfashionable or not . . . and what goes on between them is still not only the most interesting but the most important thing in the bloody murderous world (113).

This familiar truism has special significant in the era of postmodernism: writers can never avoid this subject matter even if it has been repeated hundreds and thousands of years. But, unfortunately, as Barth observes, postmodern writers, unlike Scheherazade, Chaucer, Dickens, Balzac, Joyce, and Borges, are living in the late twentieth century when every literary form has been "exhausted." Therefore, they must invent new ways of (re)telling something that has been written to death. As Barth says in "The Literature of Exhaustion," "In any case, to be technically out of date is likely to be a genuine defect: Beethoven's Sixth Symphony or the Chartres Cathedral, if executed today, might be merely embarrassing."²⁴ In Lost in the Funhouse, however, Barth

seems to have found an "intermedia" way to continue to trans-tell stories, a way that involves a textual heterarchy of different narrative boxes.

Textual heterarchy is a configuration of various tensions and interactions. The tension between "iterability" and "exhaustion" is only a reflection of interactions on other levels such as the interaction between mark and re-mark, between reference and auto-reference, between mimesis and poesis, between tradition and translation. The tension between the "formal" and the "substantial," in particular, as a architectonic echoing throughout the work, is paradigmatically developed into an interaction between two basic narrative modes--the "substantial" expressive mode of mimesis and the "formal" self-referential mode of poesis. Both literary modes have been exhausted, at least for Barth; one through nineteenth-century realism--"God damn it; take linear plot, take resolution of conflict, take third direct object, all that business, they may very well be obsolete notions, indeed they are" (112); and the other through Modernist solipsism--"the so-called 'vehicle' itself is at least questionable: self-conscious, vertiginously arch, fashionably solipsistic, unoriginal--in fact a convention of twentieth-century literature" (117). However, Barth trans-relates the two modes

in one novel--a new "mixed means" art made possible by the use of the Chinese box strategy. Obviously, the best way to trans-relate life and art, at least on the narrative level, is to make one's life a work of art, which is what one does every so often in autobiography.

Indeed, critics such as Robert Kierman have convincingly demonstrated that Lost in the Funhouse is an "autobiography." The true protagonist and author of the book is Ambrose, and other characters in Funhouse are dramatis personae for Ambrose.²⁵ Reading this novel, one experiences an artistic autobiography that contains both the author's life story and his exercise writings. Three stories "Ambrose His Mark," "Water-Message," "Lost in the Funhouse," which concern themselves directly with Ambrose, seem to provide a sketch of an artist, for they are ordered chronologically to depict Ambrose's growth from a boy into a young writer. The stories "Night-Sea Journey," "Title" and "Life-Story," with which the three Ambrose stories are alternated, develop the künstlerroman structure. The rest of the stories can be regarded as inner-fictions written by Ambrose, and consequently occupy a lower level.

Apparently, such a neat interpretation bespeaks a certain subservience to the logic of rigid generic classification. But

this interpretation is useful as a fulcrum by which to open a new discussion of Lost in the Funhouse from a different perspective, so that we can distinguish some features of postmodern Chinese box fiction from the ancient vicissitudinous genre of autobiography. The interpretation described above does not include the mode of discourse in consideration and, as a result, it ignores an important feature of Lost in the Funhouse--the tension between mimetic-autobiographical and metaphoric-autoreflexive discourses. This tension simultaneously undermines and recreates the organizational coherence of this novel. Lost in the Funhouse is clearly informed by what Ihab Hassan calls the "oppositional paradox" of postmodernism, which contains both the "fanatic will to unmaking" and "the need to discover a 'unitary' sensibility" in literary forms.²⁶ Lost in the Funhouse is not merely an artist's autobiography, or a "writer writing" fiction that gives the reader insight into fiction as a process as well as a product, but a postmodern auto-bio-text, which demonstrates a dramatic change, a shift from detailed representation of the development of an artist to inquiry into the very nature and function of aesthetic artifact. Probably "it is possible," as Derrida argues, "to have several genres, an intermixing of genres of a total

genre, the genre 'genre' or the poetic or literary genre as genre of genres."²⁷ Auto-bio-text, as an "intermedia" or "intermixing" genre, does not merely present the portrait of an artist, but transforms the artist's personal existence into a metafictional entity. In a subtle way, the Chinese box strategy also manifests itself in the function of the narrative co-optation which deals directly with the development of the artist and the nature of his art. While the literal language mimetically draws a portrait of the artist, the meta-language re-marks a reflexive metatext about the development of the book. Since the portrait is drawn in both literal and meta-language, it evokes "an intermixing of genres of a total genre," a trans-relation in the creative process: characterization is configured with narrative forms. Metafictionality of the portrait gives rise to critical contemplation on the relationship between textuality and reality.

Postmodern Chinese box fiction is a text in which the author makes use of heterarchical form that allow coexisting, dialogically engaged narrative modes to achieve reaccentuated inclusiveness. As an extension of its inclusive capacity, the Chinese box strategy, with its brilliant flexibility, can trans-relate various literary forms--realistic, allegorical,

parodic, mythic, self-conscious, and metafictional--into one work, and thereby melt them into a new configuration. In Lost in the Funhouse, ancient and modern, past and present, or fragment and whole are not polarities but are indissolubly hinged, one enhancing the other in a state of eternal flux and interaction produced by the Chinese box strategy. The asynchronous interaction among inner narrative boxes is motivated by the trans-relatedness of Barth's organization of the inner narrative boxes: from the sperm in "Night-Sea Journey" swimming towards "Her" that evokes ideas on conception of life to the ancient and anonymous singer of "Anonymiad" who launches his seeds/stories upon the sea, the novel begins and ends with notions of movement, journey, search, quest, and change in a world of Chinese box, which informs echoing associations and tran-relations among various inner narrative boxes. All the allusive echoing trans-relations strengthen the interaction among inner texts. As exemplified by Lost in the Funhouse, postmodern Chinese box fiction subverts the traditional solid and centred textuality with liquefied, re(de)centralizable narrativity which, like a hypertext, does not fix discourse into fixed isolated units, but constantly activates and reactivates the interactions among inner texts into new meaningful patterns.

David Morrell touches on a pattern of connectedness among the inner narratives, when he notes that the overall structural shift in Lost in the Funhouse is "from living in the world to living in the world of fiction,"²⁸ from the contemporary and realistic to the mythic and fantastic. Morrell's analysis of the book's movement, while in general clear and convincing, oversimplifies, in his construct of a single line of development, what is a multi-sequential movement and multi-stranded tension among different narrative boxes. In the first half of the book, for instance, the configurative tension is cultivated in the modic vacillation between auto-referential protagonist-narrator forms ("Night-Sea Journey," "Autobiography," and "Petition") and conventionally told narratives of Ambrose Mensch and his family ("Ambrose His Mark," "Water-Message," and "Lost in the Funhouse" in some parts). This alternative movement obviously highlights both the diffusion and the division of inner narratives, which disqualify at once two opposite critical views: one regards Lost in the Funhouse as metafictional text in which life is altogether ignored; and the other describes the novel as merely another "portrait of the artist." Monologic interpretations oversimplify, if not castrate, the

complex heterarchy of trans-related interactions in postmodern Chinese box fiction.

The radical interaction between "metonymic and metaphoric discourses" is probably one of the most noticeable co-optative processes that tends toward a parodic transformation of a recognizable form with the intent of iterating different translations. In Modes of Modern Writing, David Lodge has produced a useful typology of narrative modes based on Roman Jakobson's famous idea of "the distinction between metonymic and metaphoric dimensions of literature."²⁹ Since Jakobson put forth the theory of "metonymic and metaphoric discourses" in 1956, numerous critics have used this idea in various contexts.³⁰ John Barth also used Roman Jakobson's famous terminology in his discussion of modernists:

we have their famous relative difficulty of access, inherent in their antilinearity, their aversion to conventional characterization and cause-and-effect dramaturgy, their celebration of private, subjective experience over public experience, their general inclination to "metaphoric" as against "metonymic" means.³¹

The interaction between the two modes is also an interesting feature of Lost in the Funhouse in which the "metaphorical" mode brings about a disruption of the literal-figurative hierarchy that otherwise permits a reader to subordinate the figurative sign to a literal context. The terms such as

"künstlerroman" or "autobiography" critics used to describe the novel, are mainly based on a mimetic or "metonymical" context rather than on the metaphorical co-text. As the "Autobiography" himself admits, "I haven't a proper name. The one I bear's misleading, if not false. I didn't choose it either" (35). Accurately speaking, Lost in the Funhouse is an "intermedia" work without "proper name," because the meaning derived from either metonymic or metaphoric discourse does not form a complete understanding of the full scope of the novel's "re-marking" configuration. "This re-mark," according to Derrida, "can take on a great number of forms and can itself pertain to highly diverse types."³² The metaphorical discourse is not constrained by the simple purpose of marking character development; similarly, the mimetic presentation does not always purport to be a univocal reference to metafictional exposition.

Barth's "intermedia" art separates his work from other künstlerromans such as James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Barth takes hold of the biological metaphor of text and transforms it into a unique image of the creative process. In Barth's work, as Jan Marta observes, "The chronological development of the artist from conception through birth, childhood, adolescence and manhood to death

parallels the inception, genesis, death and regeneration of fiction."³³ In one sense, we can say that by turning Ambrose, the artist, into a striking metalinguistic figure, Barth personifies and energizes text and literature at the same time. The improbable effect that Lost in the Funhouse evokes seems to be the same as that Maurice Blanchot created in Death Sentence: "the path turns around to look at the man walking on it," "to see who he is" and "if the man who is coming is really the one who should be coming."³⁴ The reflexive form and text seem to vie with the character; as "Autobiography" shows, the story seems to have a being of its own, independent from the artist. If Lost in the Funhouse is an "autobiography," the autobiographer himself is created by an auto-bio-text. From time to time, Ambrose, the author, being effaced for the auto-reflexive text, wonders whether he is a "character" in a fiction written by fictitious or non-fictitious author.

The text, which transgresses normative linguistic modes, creates a tension between exhausted character and vigorous text that is characterized by a style that Michael Hinden identifies as "comically triumphant."³⁵ This style invigorates exhausted form and articulates a substantial human condition, in which the text that asserts its metaphorical

dimension cannot be taken to be as negative or as nihilistic. In John Barth, The Comical Sublimity of Paradox, Tharpe sees the textual auto-reflexivity as "farce splendid,"³⁶ but he is puzzled at the way that Barth purposely confuses the level of mimesis and the level of textual reflexivity. The point Tharpe missed is that Barth does not follow the tradition of the Anglo-American novel in which imaginative freedom is sacrificed to the development of the character's personality or Freudian ego. Ambrose is not a character that can match the hero's typology set up by Joseph Campbell in The Hero with a Thousand Faces. Neither does he conform to Martin Price's moral "form of life."³⁷ Ambrose, the auto-bio-textual character, is "a figure in the carpet," as Roland Barthes's theory suggests; inscribing himself in the textual network, "he becomes, as it were, a paper-author: his life is no longer the origin of his fictions but a fiction contributing to his work."³⁸ He emerges from the text, and then dissolves again in the text. Along his life path to the artistic funhouse, he becomes more and more elusive and eventually lost in the text he is creating and created by. This is an alternative way that Barth finds to "humanize" the text with vigorous life at the expense of Ambrose's human-like entity. Like a Todorovian homme-récit, Ambrose is gradually de-realized in ontological

terms, and becomes a textual factor with certain functional autonomy based on a psychological model.

Barth's "intermedia" art reflects a critical consciousness which demands that we dislodge from our speaking and writing of life our unspoken and unwritten logic. Barth's literary practice in Lost in the Funhouse conforms to a paradigm of interaction between mimesis and poesis, which forces us to redefine our logic, our view of humanism. The novel informs life not literally but metaphorically. The rational paradigm in traditional novels, which separates character from text and alienates human beings as subject from a world of forms, in itself neglects or suppresses humanism. Barth's idea of the exhausted state of literature and his "substantial interests" in completing a new human work agree in many respects with Derrida's view of "inscribing the signature in the text." Derrida states,

The process of transforming a work into a thing--mute, therefore, and silent when speaking, because dispensing with the signature--can only be brought about by inscribing the signature in the text, which amounts to signing twice in the process of not signing any more.³⁹

By "inscribing the signature in the text," Ambrose disappears in the funhouse of literature. But his disappearance does not confirm the absurdity of the world; rather, it denotes a

desperate attempt to re-configure and re-signify character and text simultaneously.

The "signature" that inscribed in "Lost in the Funhouse" is a self-conscious soul of the text that proceeds simultaneously forward and backward in the novel. Ambrose as a "realistic" adolescent learning about life-writing translates to Ambrose as textual figure of his own story. In the latter role his position as full-fleshed character has been challenged by the reflexive form. The artist creates the art and he is also created and inscribed by his art. Our sense of character-as-person is replaced by character-as-text, and our reading attention is shifted from the level of character analysis to the level of textual complexity. It seems that Ambrose is an exile who, in the process of crossing and re-crossing borders of space, time, language, text and narrative, translate and transform a stable identification into a mobile asynchronous inter-identification. Lost in the Funhouse, with its "metaphoric" vacillation and "metonymic" ambivalence, demonstrates that the forces of different trans-textual discourses may emerge in a re(de)constructional process of narrative translation, which challenges the "locality" of a singular textual dominance by relocating the site of a new textuality in a discursive domain of plural inter-

relationships. In a sense, Lost in the Funhouse is a transgressive narrative practice that thrives on a process of constant re-signification and re-contextualization of established assumptions and meanings of character-hood.

Lost in the Funhouse, with character priority being supplanted by the textual priority, features what Roland Barthes calls transition "from work to text." According to Barthes,

The work closes on a signified. There are two modes of signification which can be attributed to this signified: either it is claimed to be evident and the work is then the object of a literal science, . . . or else it is considered to be secret, ultimate, something to be sought out, and . . . the work then falls under the scope of a hermeneutics, of an interpretation. ⁴⁰

Lost in the Funhouse is a "intermedia" work in which the old-style character, Ambrose, who resembles actual human beings in regards to motivation, intention and moral imagination, transforms into a new kind of character, a metalinguistic figure, a mere fictional entity, a "set of signs," a group of voices, or an "enigma." We feel more and more difficulty in deciding who Ambrose is or where he is in the second part of the novel. Sometimes we suspect that the "Ambrose" is merely a "printed voice," or a textual re-mark. As the following passage suggests,

he deceived himself into supposing he was a person. He even foresaw, wincing at his dreadful self-knowledge, that he would repeat the deception, at ever-rarer intervals, all his wretched life, so fearful were the alternative. Fame, madness, suicide; perhaps all three. It's not believable that so young a boy could articulate that reflection, and in fiction the merely true must always yield to the plausible. (93)

So Ambrose's search for a genuine entity ends, not surprisingly, in the funhouse where he "loses" himself or rather translates himself into different forms; his identity as a boy established in the straightforward works dissolves in the self-conscious reflexive text, where his identity is confused with whatever or whoever he is writing, but with an Ambrose "signature." Thus, in the midpoint story "Lost in the Funhouse," there is a twist which brings reality and fiction on to the same plane, which is a place where the counter discourses meet and co-optate an inter-space between reality and fiction. This co-optative twist is central to the work's heterarchical structure which, to use Derrida's terms, "undermines the logic of identity, of a clear distinction between A and not-A."⁴¹

It is interesting to note that Barth has clearly indicated that the novel is an auto-bio-text by omitting the customary signature in "The Author's Note" and "Seven Additional Author's Notes," which should be considered as an

integral part of the novel. Barth reminds us that we are reading an auto-text whose author is lost. "Lost in the Funhouse," as well as the following narrative boxes, emphasizes the artifice of character-construction, and at the same time asks questions about the technical aspects of the text and the "acts of literature." As Barthes suggests, "Here again, the metaphor of the Text separates from that of the work; the latter refers to an image of an organism which grows by vital expansion, by 'development' (a word which is significantly ambiguous, at once biological and rhetorical); the metaphor of the Text is that of the network."⁴² As Barth hints by his inclusion of "Autobiography," Lost in the Funhouse is ostensibly narrated by an auto-bio-text stepping out to tell about itself. The "Autobiography" tells us:

Among other things I haven't a proper name. The one I bear's misleading, if not false. I didn't choose it either.

I see I see myself as a halt narrative: first person, tiresome. Pronoun sans ante or precedent, warrant or respire. Surrogate for the substance; contentless form, interestless principle; blind eye blinking at nothing. Who am I. A little crise d'identité for you.

I must compose myself. (35-6)

The novel, therefore, is the autobiography of an auto-bio-text without "a proper name," which, however, suggests the autogenous nature of postmodern fiction.

The problem of textual narcissism or auto-reflexivity is cryptically imaged in the story "Echo" as Narcissus's dilemma. As "Echo" suggests, the development of Lost in the Funhouse depends upon a tension process between narcissistic text and human voice. What lies behind "echoing" reflexivity is the effort to anchor voice in person, to limit the obsessive chain of auto-reflection. At times in the novel, the narrative voice is that of Ambrose, therefore personal; at other times, it is that of an auto-reflexive text. The obsessive chain of auto-reflection is a paradox: because this novel is supposed to be Ambrose's autobiography, Ambrose's voice as the autobiographer should be enclosing, occupying the larger box; but since Ambrose is a character inscribed in the text, the personal voice must merge into the impersonal one of the auto-reflexive text. This magic effect is described clearly by Robert Alter in his book Partial Magic: "The effect when the fiction begins thus to assume autonomy is the complementary opposite of planes of reality recorded in the Chinese tale where the imperial architect, turning from the wrath of his emperor, opens the door in the drawing of the palace he has made and disappears inside."⁴³ In Lost in the Funhouse, the twist is that Ambrose, the author, is lost in his own autobiography. The tension between Ambrose and his text is

located on the Moebius strip, where outside/reality becomes inside/fiction and vice versa. So Ambrose, like that Chinese architect, enters the funhouse of his writing and disappears inside.

This magic effect may alert us to the confusion of narrative levels in postmodern Chinese box fiction. The textual heterarchy evoked by Chinese box strategy can be regarded as one of the "Tangled Hierarchies" described by Douglas R. Hofstadter in Godel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid. Hofstadter examines several "Tangled Hierarchies" "in which a Strange Loop occurs." His analysis of M. C. Escher is particularly relevant to our discussion of the Chinese box strategy in Lost in the Funhouse. Hofstadter says,

In some of [Escher's] drawings, one single theme can appear on different levels of reality. For instance, one level in a drawing might clearly be recognizable as representing fantasy or imagination; another level would be recognizable as reality. These two levels might be the only explicitly portrayed levels. But the mere presence of these two levels invites the viewer to look upon himself as part of yet another level; and by taking that step, the viewer cannot help getting caught up in Escher's implied chain of levels, in which, for any one level, there is always another level above it of greater "reality," and likewise, there is always a level below "more imaginary" than it is.⁴⁴

Implicit in the "Tangled Hierarchies" of Escher's drawings are the tensions between reality and subjectivity, and between the

finite and the infinite, which give rise to "a strange sense of paradox,"⁴⁵ and highlights the inherent trans-relating dimension of the Chinese box strategy: the finite levels and boxes always suggest metaphorically a regressus in infinitum. The inherent paradox in tangled hierarchical systems is a useful strategy for the Chinese box novels to employ, serving both as a means of creating aesthetic resolution and as an expression of ironic conflict in logic.

Lost in the Funhouse, then, gives literature new life by revitalizing the literary medium. It shows Barth's efforts "to study the problematics of art," "to consider each work as standing in a dialectical relation to consciousness and a critical relation to the whole activity of art."⁴⁶ But the intermedia "acts" Barth explored in his book are not merely artistic problems, for they also exist parallelly in life. It exemplifies well one of Barth's contentions: a piece of artistic work never encompasses the life; it merely catches a certain moment in a continuous and never-ending process of life. As Derrida observes, "literature as historical institution with its conventions, rules, etc., but also this institution of fiction which gives in principle the power to say everything, to break free of the rules, to displace them, and thereby to institute, to invent and even to suspect the

traditional difference between nature and institution."⁴⁷ In "How to Make a Universe," Barth compares the writer to a Zen master: "He does not describe reality; he points to it. He gives you a little piece of it."⁴⁸ Because language must make provisional use of names--the name that can be named is not the real name and the reality that can realized is not the ultimate reality, Zen masters have to translate non-language into language in order to help students of Zen to grasp the direct spiritual experience. Barth says:

I've heard it said that the Zen master who has had his satori, or mystic awakening, refuses to analyze his insight into or throw his fan at you. He will not say, like Kierkegaard, that the self is a relation which relates itself to itself, and in relating itself to itself relates itself to another.⁴⁹

The Zen master also uses words, but his words do not mean in the ordinary sense, because the "meanings" they intend "break free of the rules," and escape enclosure within any particular institution. Similarly, the trans-relating literary modes Barth employs in Lost in the Funhouse are just to make the novel a work of language that transcends language, a piece of life that goes beyond life. It is a "new human work" in which we find various inner boxes or levels of fiction, but none of them fails to reveal one aspect of life. Like the Zen master, Barth builds these paradoxical tensions into his magic Chinese

box in order to inscribe his perceptions of fiction and life, and to fulfil his "formal" and "substantial" interests at the same time.

Zen Buddhism suggests a tension between what Derrida calls the "double session."⁵⁰ The tension between the two modes--the mimetic-autobiographical that presents the self-description of an author, and the metaphoric-autoreflexive that draws a parallel development of co-text, which characterizes the fundamental interplay in many contemporary auto-bio-graphies, and gives rise to critical contemplation on the interrelationship between life and art, between fiction and metafiction, and between the traditional autobiography and the contemporary auto-bio-text. Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, for example, is distinguished from outmoded and worn-out autobiographic form by its elaboration of metaphoric dimension to a degree of self-sufficiency that vies with characterization or self-presentation as the essential re-authorization of this genre. Barthes makes it clear that "I do not say: 'I am going to describe myself' but: 'I am writing a text, and I call it R. B.'"⁵¹ Obviously the text Barthes writes is not merely a mimetic-autobiographical self-description, but a text that contains a metaphoric co-text that has a textual being of its own which, for want of better

words, is called "R. B." The textual being, as Paul de Man points out in a different context, can achieve a monstrous dimension, which someone compulsively produces and on which he then becomes totally dependent and does not have the power to control (21). The Frankenstein-like autonomy that the metaphoric discourse assumes can bring about a disruption of the metonymic-metaphoric hierarchy that otherwise permits one to subordinate metaphoric signs to a literal, mimetic image.

Similar to Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, Lost in the Funhouse, with the priority of characterization being supplanted by the priority of textual performance, reflects a critical consciousness which demands that we dislodge from our speaking and writing of life our unspoken and unwritten logic of reading and understanding. In Lost in the Funhouse the old-style auto-character who resembles an actual human being in regards to motivation, intention and moral imagination, transforms into a new kind of character, a metalinguistic figure, a fictional entity, a set of signs, and a group of voices. "The literary character of the text," Derrida says, "is inscribed on the side of the intentional object, in its noematic structure, one could say, and not only on the subjective side the noetic act. There are 'in' the text features which call for the literary reading and recall the

convention."⁵² The double session may alert us to the ontological question invoked by the trans-relation of mimetic and metaphoric discourses: what is real and what is not. The two modes of discourses seem to present two levels of reality that are tangled together to give rise to a strange sense of echoing. The echoing effect underlies the double session in Lost in the Funhouse, in which the reflections and refractions go on infinitely, blurring and distorting Ambrose into non-Ambrose, autobiography into non-autobiography. As Jean Starobinski observes, "Reflection is double in its effects as well as its cause. An 'active principle,' it unifies the external world by introducing into it an network of ratios and relations. It takes scattered, isolated sensations and creates unified objects. But it also makes us aware of difference."⁵³ As I mentioned earlier, since the autoreflexive discourse constantly undermines language's referential function, it "scattered" our "sensations" of the narrator as a person. We have a sense of a mind informing the book, but it is not strictly personal. It seems that the mimetic-autobiographical discourse "convinces" us that Ambrose is a (or the) person; but meanwhile the metaphoric-autoreflexive discourse constantly "makes us aware of difference," and reminds us that this person's existence is entirely subject to language; his

existence is literally only a manner of textual performance or narrative strategy.

The story "Title" is a good demonstration of the double session between text and metatext, which shows Barth's efforts to "complete a new human work." The title, "Title," exemplifies the story's basic strategy: to establish an empty textual box, a symbol of exhausted novelistic form, which can be re-filled with meanings. "I'll fill in the blank with this noun here in my prepositional object" (105). "Everything leads to nothing: future tense; past tense; present tense. Perfect. The final question is, Can nothing be made meaningful?" (105). It seems that Barth, following Derrida, arrives at the deconstruction of the literary medium through close scrutiny of the genealogy of linguistics. Thus, Derrida's grammatological meta-analysis helps Barth refocus on the treatment of writing as a performance. In "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," Derrida points out:

There are thus two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of play. The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering, a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign. . . . The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, through the history of metaphysics or of onto-theology--in other words, throughout his entire history--has dreamed of full

presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and end of play.⁵⁴

In the story "Title," Barth plays with "the origin and end of play" with a "good-humored irony" (105). Though the story is about "blankness," about the impossibility on the part of the artist to create, to fill in the blank, the story itself is not blank or empty at all. Text of "Title," while certainly metafictional, remains for the most part a transitive act that aims at what Derrida describes as a "full presence, the reassuring foundation." In particular, we should not neglect the fact that the story at the same time establishes meaningful tendency to translate blankness into a human content. We sense the possibility of fuller characters than conventional fiction allows, and a fuller self than self-absorption permits:

Sometimes it seems as if things could instantly be altogether different and more admirable. The times be damned, one still wants a man vigorous, confident, bold, resourceful, adjective and adjective. One still wants a woman spirited, spacious of heart, loyal, gentle, adjective, adjective. That man and that woman are as possible as the ones in this miserable story, and a good deal realer. It's as if they live in some room of our house that we can't find the door to, though it's so close we can hear echoes of their voices. Experience has made them wise instead of bitter; knowledge has mellowed instead of souring them; in their forties and fifties, even in their sixties, they're gayer and stronger and more authentic than they were in their twenties; for the twenty-year-pads they have only affectionate sympathy. So? Why

aren't the couple in this story that man and woman,
so easy to imagine? (110-11)

Indeed, the characters in "this miserable story" are "a good deal realer" than those in some "realistic" works, because they, like the real people in life, are not "so easy to imagine" from the conventional perspective. This is the truth that "writers have got to find ways to write about in this adjective hour." The force of "Title," in fact, relies on the human implications of a language problem. The text is set against the metatextual scrutiny to which the auto-reflexivity is driven. The meaningless blank that prevents the text from speaking humanly is precisely what makes the metatext communicate humanly and meaningfully to us. It is true that, as Cynthia Davis observes, Barth's "fictions have gradually abandoned the pretence of realism, in favour of parodic and self-conscious techniques,"⁵⁵ but beneath the "self-conscious techniques" or foregrounding artifice, we still can find what Leo Bersani calls "characterological desire" that privileges the referential and humanizing presence in the text.⁵⁶ In Lost in the Funhouse the "characterological desire" is the fathering seed for the quest of new human form, which may resolve the tension, uniting life and art. The metatextual mode, which disrupts conventional presentation, re-marks a

positive function of the already exhausted literature for new life-hood.

The suggestion made by Barth in "Title"--"turn ultimacy against itself to make something new and valid" (109)--recurs in "Life-Story." In an era distinguished for its increasing language-consciousness, Barth tries to expose the phenomenon: "Another story about a writer writing a story! Another regressus in infinitum! Who doesn't prefer art that at least overtly imitates something other than its own processes?" (117). The story's treatment of language is a strong demonstration of language as a medium exhausted conceptually but powerful essentially to evoke human meanings. As Derrida explains, "The thing is included, as the effect of the thing in this long citation of the language. Simply, the signifier (which we refer to as such out of convenience, since strictly speaking it is no longer a question of the "sign" here), without ever being present for itself, is marked, in its place, in its powers and its values."⁵⁷ As "Life-Story" illustrates, the "pure" language experiment is constantly disrupted by "love," which is already included in the performance of language. This is the most significant "sign" of life and humanity, which make the story reach something that transcends and includes the system that explains it. The

Chinese box strategy is employed in "Life-Story" to explore the suspicion of each of the series of authors that "his own life might be a fiction, in which he was the leading or an accessory character" (115). Almost all these authors realize that they might be invented and placed in fictions by other authors truer than themselves. The Chinese box strategy resembles the way in which a constant trans-retelling is performed. In "The Literature of Exhaustion" Barth points out that "story-within-the-story" is one of Borges's ideas. Barth says:

One of his more frequent literary allusions is to the 602nd night of The Thousand and One Nights, when, owing to a copyist's error, Scheherazade begins to tell the story of the 1001 nights, from the beginning. Happily, the King interrupts, if he didn't there'd be no 603rd night ever, and while this would solve Scheherazade's problem--which is every story-teller's problem: to publish or perish--it would put the 'outside' author in a bind.⁵⁸

The "story-teller's problem" is also the "Life-Story's" problem--"to publish [tell] or perish." Probably fearing his life would be fictionalized like those of his characters, the author-character in "Life-Story" does not conclude his story. Like "Title," the story is left open. These two endless, continuous tales, "Title" and "Life-Story," illustrate some of the issues postmodern authors must deal with and try a number of ways for them to write themselves out of the box in which

they are trapped. As a result, the whole novel Lost in the Funhouse seems embedded in a larger contextual box of postmodern literature, or rather the crisis of literature is embedded as a miniature in the novel.

If life is treated as a kind of discourse, then Barth's intermedia work can be considered as a trans-relating heterarchy of discourses in which, among other things, it interacts with people's lives and loves. Only the interaction between the fiction that contains life and life that contains fiction can give literature a future. This kind of new fiction will lead Ambrose, the artist, out of the funhouse; he will no longer trap himself in a Narcissus-house, lost and frustrated, but re-mark a new way to continue to iterate his stories. This interaction is central to a new philosophy of auto-bio-textuality that breaks through the conventional autobiography genre. To use Barthes's terms, auto-bio-text is a work that "closes on a signified. There are two modes of signification which can be attributed to this signified: either it is claimed to be evident."⁵⁹

The double session of the "two modes of signification," in the final analysis, re-marks the fundamental oppositions of human existence: reality/illusion, presence/absence, subject/object, involvement/detachment, and originality/

representation. In an auto-bio-text these oppositions compete, and interact on each other, and finally enhance a "textual sublime." "The textual sublime," as Hugh J. Silverman observes, "operates in this space of difference both establishing the identity of the critical text and the respects in which it raises philosophical issues that are not identical with the text, that lie at the margins of the text, and that open up the text to itself."⁶⁰ Lost in the Funhouse, though enacted within texts that we apprehend as "literary," is transliterary in scope, because it interrogates within its textual practice not only traditional aesthetic norms but the textual reproduction of origin(ality) in general. Rather than asking what it means to produce literature, the double session asks first what it means to mark texts and secondly what it means to re-mark these texts as "iterations," or "translations." It is within this reversal of emphasis--with the literary as a re-marked codification of a primary marked origin(ality)--that auto-bio-text revolutionizes our philosophy of postmodern literature in general.

II

This has to do with the structure of a text, with what I will call, to cut corners, its iterability, which both puts down roots in the unity of a context and immediately opens this non-saturable context onto a recontextualization.

Jacques Derrida

Acts of Literature⁶¹

Playing with inevitable complicity with traditional modes, Lost in the Funhouse explores what Ihab Hassan calls the "oppositional paradox" of postmodernism. In order to create a new "intermedia" work, Barth turns away from traditional notions of the well-made novel to exploit innovative ways of using language and "sublime text." By making the narrative form itself the central metaphor for

representing the larger box of life, Barth is able to re-mark life while keeping his fiction technically innovative. One striking feature of Lost in the Funhouse, therefore, is its parodic effect. "Parody of this kind," as Linda Hutcheon observes, "is one way of making the link between art and what Said calls the 'world,' though it appears on the surface to be distinctly introverted, to be only a form of inter-art traffic. It is significant that postmodernist architects do not often use the term parody to describe their ironically recontextualized echoing of the forms of the past."⁶² In Lost in the Funhouse, tradition is as important as innovation, since for Barth writing is always an "inter-art" or "intermedia" process that involves the consciousness of literary history. As John Barth himself points out, the effort to assimilate the past and the present can be called a modus operandi to "have it both ways."⁶³ In his interview with Joe David Bellamy, Barth mentioned the phrase "to have it both ways" twice to indicate that it is the right "way to assimilate what's gone before us" and what will come in the future:

The trick, I guess, in any of the arts at this hour of the world, it [sic] to have it both ways. That is, one more or less understands why the history of art, including the art of fiction, has let it through certain kinds of stages and phases to where we are now.

And

to find a way to assimilate what's gone before us in the twentieth century--Joyce, Beckett, Borges, and the rest--and yet tell stories, which is an agreeable thing to do...how to have it both ways.⁶⁴

John Barth also mentioned this idea on other occasions. For example, in his interview with Evelyn Glaser-Wöhrer, John Barth talked about his efforts to excavate useful treasures in the past:

impulse to go back to the beginning of things, narrative things, to see to what contemporary uses they might be put.⁶⁵

In his interview with Frank Gado, John Barth referred once again to his efforts to assimilate the past and the present:

my objective has been to attempt to assimilate as well as I can the twentieth century aspects of my medium, to invent some myself, and, at the same time (and here's where I become a conservative), to preserve the appeal that narrative has always had to the imagination.⁶⁶

Actually, Barth's effort to combine the past and the present is well-known common knowledge. As Alfred Appel, Jr. observes, "If 'Lost in the Funhouse' is the best fiction in the book, it may be because Barth has it both ways."⁶⁷

"To have it both ways" does not mean to develop in parallel, but to enter into a dialogue with the past or the history. "There is a sort of paradoxical historicity in the experience of writing," as Derrida maintains. "The writer can

be ignorant or naive in relation to the historical tradition which bears him or her, or which s/he transforms, invents, displaces."⁶⁸ Definitely Barth is not "ignorant" of the historical tradition; moreover, he consciously plays with the tension between the past and the present. Lost in the Funhouse demonstrates Barth's attempt to iterate ancient mythology in postmodern form, and to make use of the "iterability" of old texts in a new "non-saturable context." Probably it is one of right ways to cope with the "kaputness" of literature. As Barth suggests, we have to admit the trans-relation between originality and repetition, and to turn exhaustion of old modes into replenishment of a new form. Returning to old stories and iterating them in new ways, contemporary writers can invite the reader into an "original" reflexive world composed of re-marks and echoes.

"Menelaiad" in Lost in the Funhouse contains a very old story from the Iliad and the Odyssey, which has been told and retold throughout the centuries. Barth re-translates this mythological story in defiance of the fact he is taking the risk of "repetition." Actually Barth does not repeat, but re-mythologizes, because his return to the ancient myth is on a higher spiral level of Chinese box. The old Greek myth is re-imagined and re-translated into a totally new story. The aim

of Barth's re-trans(re)lation of myth is to seek artistic rejuvenation of story-(re)telling art. Indeed, Barth's (re)use of the ancient stories shows us that literature can renew itself by re-marking its origin and trans-relating the ancient with the present. Barth's re-mythologizing serves as a synthesizing means for him to rework the iterable contents and forms of the past without being suffocated by conventions. In a sense, "Menelaiad" is a "voicing" example of Barth's alternative to the Modernist literature of "exhaustion" and "silence." The re-mythologizing in "Menelaiad" provides a co-optative model capable of overcoming contradiction and tension between originality and repetition. What "Menelaiad" illustrates is the possibility that a storyteller can, instead of keeping silence in the age of exhaustion, turn origin(ality) into a paradox and employ it to re-mark new iterable stories.

In reconstructing his new story of the Menelaus, Barth weaves into the textual network different versions of the same story in order to "dehistoricize" it. These versions are layered as different narrative levels within the story, and each level indicates a different perspective. All these perspectives are structured in a radically regressive Chinese box, which are established by the voice of Menelaus who

"trans-tells" the tale of his past life to himself, Peisistratus, Telemachus, and other listeners. As Derrida opines,

Not that the text is thereby dehistoricized, but historicity is made of iterability. There is no history without iterability, and this iterability is also what lets the traces continue to function in the absence of the general context or some elements of the context.⁶⁹

Apparently, the "iterability" of Menelaus's story makes him not only eternally "historicized" but also developed, since the story is not the same at each (re)telling--Menelaus's life seems to have changed in the various iterations by different re-telling or trans-telling "contexts." The levels in the Chinese box confuse themselves, as Menelaus attempts to trans-relate all the periods of time of his re-telling(s) of the tale(s) of his life(ves) in different contexts.

The multi-layered tale or "trans-tale" that Menelaus tells is a story of disguises centred on the enigmatic Helen. Menelaus says:

She's the death of me and my peculiar immortality, cause of every mask and change of state. On whose account did Odysseus become a madman, Achilles woman? Who turned the Argives into a horse, loyal Sinon into a traitor, yours truly from a mooncalf into a sea-calf. Proteus into everything that is? first cause, and final magician: Mrs. M. (130-31)

In his quest for decipherment, Menelaus fights his way through all the narrative layers. At one point he asks, "when will I

reach my goal through its cloaks of story? How many veils to naked Helen?" (144). Before Helen chooses him as her husband, Menelaus believes that he is the least hopeful of her admirers, of whom "Menelaus alone paid the maid not court, though his brother Agamemnon, wed already to her fatal sister, sued for form's sake on his behalf" (153). "While others wooed he brooded, played at princing, grappled idly with the truth that those within his imagination's grasp--which was to say, everyone but Menelaus--seemed to him finally imaginary, and he alone, ungraspable, real" (153). But as the "fit mate" for the fairest Helen, Menelaus is wrecked with self-doubt. "Why me?" he asks (155). Despite her words, he cannot believe in her love for him--"To love is easy; to be loved, as if one were real, on the order of others: fearsome mystery! Unbearable responsibility" (156). Even after fathering their child Hermione, he still questions the reality of Helen's love:

It wasn't Zeus disguised as Menelaus who begot her, any more than Menelaus disguised as Zeus; it was Menelaus disguised as Menelaus, a mask masking less and less. Husband, father, lord, and host he played, grip slipping; he could imagine anyone loved, no accounting for tastes, but his cipher self. In his cups he asked on the sly their house guests: "Why'd she wed me, less horsed than Diomedes, et cetera?" None said. (151)

Menelaus thinks of himself as merely a re-mark of love or a shadow of someone else. In this self-doubt mental condition he invites Paris into his home, and that invitation eventually results in the Trojan war. After the war, Menelaus continue to search for answers to his inexplorable relationship to Helen: Why did the magnificent beauty choose to wed Menelaus who is "less crafty than Diomedes, artful than Teucer, et cetera?" (154) Menelaus "doggedly" looks for a cause-and-effect logic of events, for a logical ordering of reality. His puzzle is ultimately boiled down, in his innermost story, to an ontological question: "Who am I"? He goes off to consult the Oracle at Delphi with his question. The Oracle's answer is seven sets of quotation marks enclosing nothing: " ' " ' " ' " ' " ' " ' " (158). The mystic effect is like breaking boxes on all layers only to find that there is nothing at the centre.

The prospect of finding nothing in the central box suggests not only the fictiveness of literary character but also "the effect of the same a-logical 'logic' of the singular and iterable mark" in literary language.⁷⁰ The blank at the centre of the Oracle's answer implies that language is a paradox which denies the certainty of any original "truth." For Oracle's puzzling answer is like a Zen master's teaching,

which is paradoxically above human language. "When Buddha speaks of his enlightenment," D. T. Suzuki writes,

he describes his experience as something which cannot be comprehended by any of his followers because their understanding can never rise up to the level of Buddha's. It is another Buddha who understands a Buddha, Buddhas have their own world into which no beings of ordinary calibre of mentality can have a glimpse. Language belongs to this world of relativity, and when Buddha tries to express himself by this means his hearers are naturally barred from entering his inner life.⁷¹

What results from this contradiction between the noncommunicable "inner life" and the need to express it within the limits of language is the paradoxical nature or "a-logical logic" of all language products, particularly literature. It is for this reason that Zen Buddhism tries to avoid the use of language, since the meaning that can be put into words is not the true meaning. "One of the statements Zen is always ready to make is: 'No depending on words.'" ⁷²

Suzuki does not offer any explanation in words of the very paradox inherent in this statement "No depending on words." This paradox, in effect, is a transcendental truth about all fiction and literature. If an artist should be like a Zen master, as Barth claims in "How to Make a Universe," he must accept this paradox, which may present itself as the legitimate alternative to modernist tendency to silence--to abandon language as an "exhausted" tool. If Modernism stressed

the "kaputness" of language and the inadequacy of individual's struggle with language, Barth's "Menelaiad" re-marks a return to language, and to the paradoxical, a-logical dimensions of language. Menelaus does not abandon insistence on origin that may be translated as "truth," "reality," or "ultimacy," but he accepts its paradox and bewilderment. In his quest for the true or original answers to the question of "whether I was the world's chief fool and cuckold or its luckiest mortal" (133), Menelaus is trapped in a bottomless Chinese box of language with compounded ironies, evasions, disguises and co-optations. As narrative boxes build layer upon layer around a centre that is empty, it is the productiveness of uncertainty that stands out most. The narrative artifice, featured as much in the narrative language as in the ingenious structure of the Chinese box, simultaneously affirms the power of language and its inadequacy to reality--the ultimate origin. As uncertainties accumulate within the layers of the story, the paradox of "no depending upon words" contributes to both the construction and deconstruction of possibilities. When the narrative exuberantly raises the questions about Helen, Paris, and the whole Trojan war, it poses an exploration of mythology which first raises fundamental epistemological questions such as "had he [Menelaus] ever been in Troy?" (166), and then

ontological ones such as, "Who am I [Menelaus]?" Within the ambiguities of language, "meaning," "reality" and "truth" must be tentative and relative; there are too many versions for any "reality," and too many "repetitions" of any origin, too many trans(re)lations of any history. Literature is a type of iterable discourse which may produce various meanings independent its origin(ality), yet it is inevitably situated in non-saturable context in which the new text constantly interact with other older co-texts. Within such a world of interactive and co-optative simultaneity legendary Menelaus and Helen retain their mystery in Barth's artful recycling of classical mythology in a postmodern co-optative trans-tale that unfolds betwixt and between times and places.

Barth's trans-telling of ancient myth seems to constitute, in a sense, a re-iteration of Northrope Frye's claim of the interrelatedness of all literature--"It's all one tale," as the voice of Menelaus asserts. But Barth's return to ancient myth is not merely confined to the sense of interrelatedness. Frye is certainly right to stress the mythic aspect of modernism and insist that the twentieth century is "once again a great mythopoeic age."⁷³ But he never explores, for obvious reasons, the striking difference between modernism and postmodernism. Although Barth and other

"postmodernists" have inherited the mythic impulse from modernism, their attitude to myth seems different from those of earlier writers. As Kirsti Simonsuuri has observed, "the modernists viewed the culture of antiquity from the standpoint of strangers, and classical mythology in due course was made a distant and difficult historical phenomenon."⁷⁴ If modernists such as Eliot, Mann, and Proust were attracted to the life and glory in the primitive environment, Barth seems to be drawn to myth more by a sense of simultaneity, co-existence as well as trans-relating iteration. In "Literature of Replenishment," Barth quotes the seventeenth-century mystic and eccentric Thomas Browne as saying, "Every man is not only himself . . . men are lived over again."⁷⁵ This implies a sort of continuous process which not only follows one's own life but also co-exists with it. The principle does not involve simply consecutive progression but also simultaneity. So Barth does not use myth as T. S. Eliot, for instance, used it to contrast past glory with present mundaneness; rather, for Barth the ancient myth is a current event because the past is always the present on time's ever-turning wheel of regression and eternal return. There is progression in this perpetual return; and the image of the Moebius strip, which contests the genealogies of "origin" that lead to claims for

historical priority, is surely called to mind with regard to the regressive progression.

Barth's attitude towards myth and time informs his concept of paradox. The success of "Menelaiad" depends, by Barth's own account, on his ability to trans-relate past and present. In Barth's opinion, the mythos of realism is in essence deeply mythic. Barth's paradoxical idea about realism and its reliance on myth leads him to radical rethinking of the traditional assumptions underlying literary forms. The importance of "insisting on paradox" has been observed by Derrida:

To insist on this paradox is not an antiscientific gesture--quite the contrary. To resist this paradox in the name of so-called reason or of a logic of common sense is the very figure of a supposed enlightenment as the form of modern obscurantism.⁷⁶

In "Menelaiad," Barth does not experiment with the forms that refer to the mythic archetypes but with the dismantled pieces of myth--what Claude Levi-Strauss calls the mythemes. He submits myth to juxtapositional analysis in his writing. In this paradoxical posture he is simultaneously an anti-mythologizer who reworks old material, and a playful fabulator who, like Levi-Strauss's "bricoleur," break traditional formalism in order to experiment with the possibilities for new forms.⁷⁷ In this way Barth does not rewrite old myths

but re-mythologizes them, and re-translate them into new trans-tales; this kind trans-telling is a contentious performance of the perplexity of iteration. As one of his most ambitious stories, "Menelaiad" is intended to reconsider the prestigious content of Western myth, to reconfigure the old mythic pattern, to recondition the Western literary tradition, and finally, to reconstruct a larger room of narrative maneuvers for new fiction. One of Barth's intentions in "Menelaiad," therefore, is to dislodge, to a degree, the mythos of mimetic realism which, as Barth would believe, is not adequate for reality of life.

In Barth's opinion, traditional realism relies on underlying myths for production of meaning, and as a result, constitutes an epistemic hegemony through which literary products of the world are seen and judged according to myth's ideal form. Therefore, traditional novels, controlled by myth-determined discourses, "point always to mythic archetypes."⁷⁸ Barth's intention in using mythic material, however, is to re-address the changing relation between literature and myth. In this sense, all Barth's re-mythologizing stories are anti- or trans-myths that link the past to the future. To use Bakhtin's terminology, trans-myth suggests "the necessity of the past and the necessity of its place in a line of continuous

development. . . finally the aspect of the past being linked to a necessary future."⁷⁹ For the sake of future, Barth de-stereotypes old myths in his stories. For instance, Menelaus in Barth's "Menelaiad" does not echo our ideal heroic archetype; instead, we find a Menelaus who is a comical anti-hero; interestingly enough, he is a bewildered "postmodern" storyteller rather than an ancient daring warrior: "My problem was, I'd too much imagination to be a hero" (142). He has a story to tell about "the absurd, unending possibility of love" (167). As he (re)tells his story, Menelaus sinks into a maze of Chinese box stratification in which he tells a story in which he retells the story in which he trans-tells that story. By using the Chinese box strategy, Barth skilfully positions his "anti-hero" within settings as well as tellings, keeping the two convoluted together. Barth simultaneously places his narrator in the paradoxical telling, retelling and trans-telling processes to re-mark an extreme version of the complex and ironic viewpoint that dismantles myth-supported realism and heroism.

As our expectation of heroic development is frustrated, our sense of reality and history that are rooted deeply in myth is challenged. Barth's "Menelaiad," which is based on the Trojan War, actually runs against the grain of our historical,

or rather, mythic common knowledge of the Trojan War. For instance, Helen's story to Menelaus, which mediates between "irrational" history and "rational" imagination, would surely re-set the values of our common knowledge of history into the dark:

your wife was never in Troy. Out of love for you I left you when you left, but before Paris could up-end me, Hermes whisked me on Father's orders to Egyptian Proteus and made a Helen out of clouds to take my place.

All these years I've languished in Pharos, chaste and comfy, waiting for you, while Paris, nothing wiser, fetched Cloud-Helen off to Troy, made her his mistress. (164)

The Trojan War was then fought over a spurious Helen "made of clouds," while the real Helen remained chastely at home. While numerous soldiers fought in blood and died in vain, and while Penelope, Odysseus's wife, coquetted with her suitors, Helen waited continently for the return of Menelaus--"Husband, I have never been in Troy," and "I've never made love with any man but you" (163). Menelaus later accepts his wife's advice--"Espouse me without more carp! The senseless answer to our riddle woo, mad history's secret, base-fact and footer to the fiction crazy-house our life: imp-slayer love, terrific as the sun! Love! Love!" (165) and loses himself in the "a-logical" discourse of the iterable love and fiction. So the Menelaus who trans-tells the tale has come to believe in an explanation

which turns more than ten years of his own experience into fiction. He denies the reality that exists in his memory and translates reality into fiction for the sake of love. This may remind the reader of what Joseph Frank calls the "transformation of the historical imagination into myth"--which he sees as characteristic of our time: "Modern literature has been engaged in transmuting the time world of history into the timeless world of myth." Frank's explanation for this is that "time is the very condition of that flux and change from which . . . man wishes to escape when he is in a relation of disequilibrium with the cosmos" ⁸⁰ In a sense, then, Menelaus as a story teller has transgressed the boundary of reality into the domain of art--and in so doing he has cut himself off from the ontological "cosmos." In other words, Menelaus in Barth's story finally attempts to escape from the origin, from the truth. He closes his eyes to Helen's infidelity as well as to his won infidelity to original myth. He embraces Helen and stops bothering himself with the question about the original source for truth: who/what tells the truth, Helen or historian? Fiction or history?

For Menelaus, telling the story and loving Helen are intertwined together. Actually, love, or rather, the question of love, is the main concern of the story. The Chinese box

strategy, however, treats the question of love in a strikingly new way. The question at the centre of the concentric circles of Menelaus's story: " ' " ' " ' Why?' I repeated, " I repeat ' I repeated, " I repeated, ' I repeated, " I repeated' (152) is answered by Helen: " ' " ' " ' Love! ' " ' " ' " (155). In spite of the numerous hints that suggest Helen's continuous unfaithfulness, Menelaus decides to believe her story, and to "suspend disbelief," because of Proteus's words to him: "Helen chose you without reason because she loves you without cause; embrace her without question" (156). Similarly, he finally comes to accept the limitation of words in spite of the possible untruthfulness of them. If acceptance of "a-logical logic" is necessary for both love and fiction, he will accept it. In fact, Helen's "love" is analogous to the nature of postmodern fiction which, without being directly imitative, indicates an unending possibility of iteration. Menelaus deliberately chooses the non-sense of love over sense-making doubt, telling Helen he has given up his questions because he loves her: "I believe all. I understand nothing. I love you" (162). In other words, Menelaus is not foolish, not fooled by Helen, but he has chosen to be surmounted by Helen's love: "I was taken in, it's a gift, a gift-horse, I shut my eyes" (167). Both in love and in fiction, "we can no longer even

talk here of an event, of the event of such a text," to use Derrida's words; "we can no longer question its meaning except by falling short of it, within the network of values which it has in practice put into question."⁸¹ Because of "the doggedness with which he clung to the dream of embracing despite all Helen" (153), Menelaus eventually finds his way into and out of the Chinese box of love and fiction without questioning. The extremely complicated structure of the Chinese box of story within a story, regressus nearly ad infinitum, does not entrap him. He hangs on to his love and story as he hangs on to Proteus on the beach, because Menelaus does not divorce love from his art: each enhances the other. For Menelaus, storytelling and loving are the same--both are the gracious and a-logical act of the desire to iterate and to co-optate.

Barth's remarkable achievement in "Menelaiad," then, is his "original" re-mythologizing of the old myth, which gives rebirth to the ancient material, and consequently suggests a new alternative for postmodern fiction. This new alternative is similar to the "new technique" Borges mentioned in his story "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote": "The technique is one of deliberate anachronism and erroneous attributions . . . This technique with its infinite applications, urges us

to run through the Odyssey as if it were written after the Aeneid."⁸² Since the ancient mythology with its variant versions comes to be ironically bound within the temporal perspective of Barth's "Menelaiad," the ostensible "origin" of Barth's story becomes a product within that story through the contextualizing mobility of the Chinese box strategy; in other words, the mythic outer box of Barth's story--the Menelaus-Helen myth is mise-en-abyme into an inner box in Barth's "Menelaiad." In this reversal lies the contextual perspective offered by the Chinese box strategy: Barth's postmodern trans-telling seems to make of all texts the pretexts of other texts. In the case of "Menelaiad," an ever-receding horizon of narrative brings about an endless proliferation of old myth, in which Menelaus appears as a diminishing point on the hallucinated horizon of his own story. In this sense, Barth's re-mythologizing challenges what Derrida calls "logocentrism," a Western predisposition to connect the meaning of a story/text to a point of origin, to a myth, to an author, to a specific cultural and historical force. Mining the distance of time and space, "Menelaiad" iterates the mythic story of Menelaus through an ever-evolving ontology of narration: in the co-optative regression of the Chinese box, origin and originality present themselves only as trompe l'oeil. The

story thus becomes a meta-story of origin(ality). In this respect, "Menelaiad," as well as the whole novel Lost in the Funhouse, rests on a sort of anachronical textual heterarchy that facilitates the search for "iterable" new medium and new forms, and the exploration of new configurations of time and space, based on an interactive trans-relation of narrative boxes.

CHAPTER THREE

The White Hotel:

D. M. Thomas's Chinese Box

Far from seeing language as an instrument in the service of a psychic energy, the possibility now arises that the entire construction of drives, substitutions, repressions, and representations is the aberrant, metaphorical correlative of the absolute randomness of language, prior to any figuration of meaning.

Paul de Man

Allegories of Reading¹

When it appeared in 1981, D. M. Thomas's The White Hotel was, on the whole, well received everywhere: "a reminder that fiction can amaze" said Time Magazine;² "indescribable poetic

effect" praised The New York Times,³ and "Precise, troubling, brilliant" acclaimed the Observer.⁴ The novel's popularity was perhaps also promoted by the prolonged debate about the novel's alleged "sexual sensationalism" and "its plagiarism of the documents of history."⁵ Both the enthusiastic response and massive attack have brought D. M. Thomas international fame. The White Hotel is also a book that its first readers would find "upsetting," as Linda Hutcheon observes.⁶ In David Cowart's opinion, Kafka's axiom that "a book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us" is the most appropriate "formulation" that reviewers searched for "to gauge the effect this novel had on them."⁷ As Mary F. Robertson points out, "This novel seems to have touched a cultural nerve in the way that books that are both best sellers and respected works of art do."⁸ Now that the initial excitement and controversy over alleged sensationalism and plagiarism have died down, I believe that it is time to explore calmly the artistic depths of this novel, to see how carefully it is organized, to find out what kind of "cultural nerve" it has actually touched, and to develop a more certain view about what Thomas is trying to convey by means of the delicate Chinese box strategy which plays a key role in his novel.

Similar to other Chinese box works, The White Hotel consists of several stylistically different and textually trans-related narrative boxes. Thomas's Chinese box strategy re-marks the coexistence, interaction and interdependence of these boxes that express simultaneously the various contents of the fictional worlds within a single work. Obviously, a work of this kind is not a sum of unrelated fragments, but a co-optative whole--that is, a form in which the implicit dialogue or interplay intervenes between different narrative boxes. The Chinese box novel is a paradox, "that is," to borrow Robert Wilson's words, "the whole cannot be known except through the parts, but the parts cannot be known except through the whole."⁹ What is important with respect to Thomas's Chinese box strategy is that each narrative box represents a different point of view expressed by an autonomous voice, each questioning the credibility of events, symptoms and symbols, and the authenticity of characters. There is no functional resolution of the respective presentations by the various narrative boxes which are counterpoised in the text: they all express themselves--autonomously according to their specific points of view. Interaction is the implicit and constitutive factor that not only unifies the totality but also specifies each narrative in

its relative autonomy; and the interaction also causes a reciprocal modification: each of these narrative boxes modifies others and in so doing is itself modified. The interaction is so effective that there is no effort on the part of the author, D. M. Thomas himself, to reconcile or translate the different versions/visions into a single, definitive one. Since the novel does not privilege any authoritative narrative perspective or vision, the reader is encouraged to perform successive acts of resignification and recontextualization of previously established meanings. It is a process which involves a recognition of the inadequacy of any perspective and an acknowledgment of the unresolved nature of narrative multiplicity.

The brilliant use of the Chinese box strategy whereby various narrative boxes play against one another at different levels is the most fascinating and disturbing aspect of the novel. Set against a Nietzschean perspectivism that "every inquiry presupposes a particular point of view" and thereby "excludes an indefinitely large number of others," Thomas's Chinese box strategy incorporates a deliberate assimilation of multiple and ostensibly contradictory possibilities that stretch and transgress the boundaries of the narrative as they suggest alternate ways of not only viewing, but also

presenting and knowing. As a postmodern novel, Thomas's book manages to offer both a vivid version and a subversion of it through a pluralizing multivalency of perspectives. The overt use of multiple narrative boxes and the wild play with points of view suggest a textualized refusal to any single authoritative position or meaning. The narrative unity within each narrative box of the novel is always disrupted by the opening of another box with a different vision. At any given moment, the narrative seems incomplete, provisional, and ready to accept the possibility of re-interpretation. As a result, the Chinese box strategy entails a decentred point of view by which everything within the novel is atomized into different and simultaneous perspectives between which a dynamic interaction intervenes as the only potential for meaning.

As is the case with Chinese box works generally, The White Hotel is a textual heterarchy in which the process of the dynamic narrative trans-relation indicates the presence of a profound meaning. But in this novel, the narrative strategy mediates in the protagonist's psychological revelation. The protagonist, Lisa, is treated as "the soul of humanity in modern times"¹⁰; and as David Cowart has observed, "the phases of the individual's development could serve as a paradigm for the phases through which whole civilizations

pass."¹¹ While the novel unveils an inside world of Lisa--a "landscape of hysteria," the multi-levelled Chinese box strategy reveals that the perceptions, repressions, and experiences of the protagonist reflect, as microcosm to macrocosm, a larger landscape beyond the personal liminality. By structuring the novel as a psychoanalytic case history, by multiplying narrative voices, by layering fictive and historical elements and by juxtaposing various narratives, The White Hotel creates a complex textual heterarchy which eventually reveals itself as an image of the larger, eternal and divine whole of which one's individual life and experiences are a part. This divine whole seems to be a mysterious space where the human soul soars; and psychoanalysis is insufficient for an understanding of it-- "The soul of a man," says Freud in The White Hotel, "is a far country, which cannot be approached or explored."¹²

I

For psychoanalysis the Real is a construct, a reading--if you will, an interpretation.

C. B. Chabot

Freud on Schreber¹³

As D. M. Thomas himself claims, The White Hotel is a "synthesis" of many voices and visions, embodying his dreamed "totality of form" and "infinity of life,"¹⁴ which are textually and structurally realised by the Chinese box strategy whereby he could juxtapose the fragmented fantastical, psychological, historical and mythical elements against a framework of reading process that perpetually changes meaning while simultaneously revealing the deep structure of his attempted "synthesis." His overt use of

multiple narrative boxes--the Prologue letters, poetic fantasy, prose fantasy, Freudian case history, biographical account, historical narrative, and surrealistic story--affords a kaleidoscopic and stroboscopic effect to the novel, offering visions and re-visions sometimes complementary, sometimes perplexing for their apparent contradictions. The narrative moves on different levels, shifting perspectives, and follows various kinds of interpretations developed to extremes and then dropped in favour of others. The very disjunctiveness and inadequacy of the textual boxes seem to confirm the relativity and subjectiveness of their presentations; and the multiple and often contradictory narrative voices and visions draw attention to the impossibility of a totalizing narrative authority, and to the illusion of unity on all levels of narrative. Throughout the novel, we seem to be situated in the presence of a world resembling those elaborate Chinese ivory carvings whose multilinked spaces can never be seen in their entirety from any single perspective.

With its immense spatiality of multiple spheres, The White Hotel seems to be a good example of the spatial presentation that Joseph Frank praised in his well-known essay, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature."¹⁵ "The meaning-relationship" in such a novel, "is completed only by the

simultaneous perception in space" and "by the very act of juxtaposition."¹⁶ In Thomas's work all the narrative boxes, which are textually disjunctive and narratively incomplete, are juxtaposed and interlocked by the Chinese box strategy whereby each new textual box seems to expand, challenge and subvert the preceding one by providing more recontextualizing possibilities. In each narrative box we seem to get something definite, but the recontextualization of each of them changes their meanings. Throughout the novel, we seem to follow a paradox, a tension between definiteness and infinity, between partiality and totality. The multiple and often contradictory partial visions draw attention to the illusion of unity on all levels of narrative. Thus Thomas's view of "totality" is then achieved in a paradoxical juxtaposition which involves a recognition of the inadequacy of any perspective and an acknowledgment of the unresolved nature of the narrative multiplicity. Thomas's Chinese box strategy, therefore, challenges our habit that we are pleased to have definite things to work with but puzzled when their meanings are changed in different contexts. The intriguing vitality that is offered to the novel by Thomas's Chinese box strategy is a recontextualizing mobility, so that there is continuous creation of knowledge and production of meaning, as all

narrative boxes are subject to being re-mixed, re-located, re-interpreted, re-vitalized by new contexts.

Although Frank's theory of "spatial form" can help us follow the emphasis on The White Hotel's multiple narrative boxes, the concept "spatiality" alone cannot describe the complexity of the novel in that Frank's idea is derived from Kantian categories of space and time as polar opposites. Although he uses the term "spatial" rather indefinitely to mean something abstract, atemporal, and nonlinear, Frank makes an apparent overstatement when he says that temporality in modern, spatially conceived literature has vanished:

the dimension of depth has vanished from history as it forms the content of these works; past and present are seen spatially, locked in a timeless unity which, while it may accentuate surface differences, eliminates any feeling of historical sequence by the very act of juxtaposition.¹⁷

Frank ignores an important fact that even the most "spatial" literatures, as Walter Sutton has pointed out, are still perceived in certain time . . . and meaning is dependent on time.¹⁸ Unlike the modern exemplary works mentioned in Frank's essay, The White Hotel is a far more complex postmodern work in which time and space are reversible, with temporal realms and space zones collapsing into each other. It seems that Thomas's emphasis on arranging the narrative boxes in a series of fantastic, historical and mythic temporal

realms may be a temporal countermove to the heavy spatial dimension of the novel. All these temporal realms also reemerge and remix in different narrative boxes, and aggressively signal their own internal time by the spatial arrangement.

With its complex spatiality and temporality, The White Hotel projects a psychical topography, which is multi-faceted and multi-layered. As F. L. Radford observes, "the human psyche cannot be defined by single images."¹⁹ Thomas manipulates many kinds of desire, many kinds of space, many kinds of time, trans-relating them in different narrative boxes. The first narrative box following the Prologue seems to be such a psychical sketch that maps the world of Lisa's unconscious in the form of a fantastical poem written between the staves of Mozart's opera "Don Giovanni." The mysterious "white hotel" seems to be situated in a queer world where strange things come and go freely like mirages. As Sachs, one of the addressees of Freud's letters, opines in his letter to Freud, "Her phantasy strikes me as like Eden before the Fall--not that love and death did not happen there, but there was no time in which they could have meaning" (14-15). The next narrative box, "The Gastein Journal," repeats and expands Lisa's fantasy, re-marking the surreal quality of the poem in

a prose version. Through these two texts, we learn that the "white hotel" is a dwelling place set beside a lake in the mountains, where uncanny, ominous events frequently occur: guests see stars falling, lightning striking the lake, a breast flying through the trees, an embryo floating in the lake, a womb gliding across the lake, etc. In addition, there is a mysterious fire in which people are killed, and then a weird landslide that buries those who are still alive. Although no explanation is given, the descriptions of the events must be identified with a dream world or a hysterical space of the unconscious.

Such a dream world will assuredly remind us of the "oneiric space" that Gaston Bachelard discusses in his well-known book The Right to Dream:

The space in which we shall spend our nocturnal hours has no perspective, no distance. It is the immediate synthesis of things and ourselves. If we dream of an object, we enter that object as into a shell. Our oneiric space always has this coefficient. Sometimes in flying dreams we think we are very high up, but we are no more than a little bit of flying matter. And the skies we soar through are wholly interior--skies of desire or hope or pride.²⁰

Among the heavy implications we are to take from Bachelard's passage is that the subject and object are sometimes reversible in a dream world--"If we dream of an object, we enter that object as into a shell." The dream world in the

"Don Giovanni" and "The Bad Gastein Journal," then, may be a hysterical fantasy that hovers between hallucination and nightmare, as Thomas indicates in "Preface." But such a dream world is not totally subjective or irrational. If we are to read the other narrative boxes as a series of echoing narratives, the distinction between the objective and the subjective is not clear-cut. The irrational states of mind are trans-related to some irrational situations and events in history; the subjective hysteria, so to speak, is to be rediscovered as an accurate prediction of objective experience.

What is peculiar with Thomas's work is that we cannot follow one line up to the end, for, as Michael Hollington has observed, the novel contains many "jerks" which constantly change the narrative into a different direction.²¹ Just as we are travelling deep into the "oneiric" space of Lisa's dream world, we are suddenly shocked awake by a psychoanalytical case study "Frau Anna G." by Sigmund Freud, one of the most authoritative interpreters of dreams in the world. "One could not travel far in the landscape of hysteria," as the author warns in the "Author's Note," "without meeting the majestic figure of Sigmund Freud" (5). Thus, from a novel of poetic fantasy, The White Hotel suddenly

changes into a psychoanalytic fiction with a doctor's case history of "a young woman suffering from a severe hysteria," which expands our perspective by supplying some "facts" about the author of the first two texts and the circumstances of their composition. The author of the poem and journal is an opera singer named Lisa Erdman (called "Frau Anna G." in Freud's case history), who complains that she has suffered for years with severe pains in her left breast and ovary, and with "visual hallucinations of disordered and frightening nature" (84). When she visits Bad Gastein, an Austrian health resort, Lisa writes down "her impressions" in the form of the fantastical poem. Later on, at Freud's request for "her own analysis of the material she had produced" (104), Lisa provides the prose journal in which, "instead of writing an interpretation . . . she had chosen to expand her original phantasy" (104).

In her discussion of The White Hotel, Mary F. Robertson asserts that "the subject matter" of Freud's interpretation of "Lisa's hysteria seems an especially convenient peg on which to hang such a surfictionist performance, since for the classical Freudian these symptoms are signs of some deeper reality to be penetrated by always tenuous interpretive moves."²² Although I do not see much "surfictionist

performance" in Freud's case history, I do agree that Freud's psychoanalysis is largely presented as a matter of literary interpretation in this novel. In my opinion, Freud's psychoanalysis resembles in every respect De Man's "allegory of reading," rather than a vaguely defined "surfiction," for Freud sees Lisa's writing as an uncensored, "remarkably courageous document" (106), which provides the key to the mystery of Lisa's illness. When he reads Lisa's poem and journal, Freud "began to glimpse the meaning behind the garish mask" (105), and to allegorize an "unravelling" interpretation of Lisa's hysteria. According to Freud, the death of her mother, her father's harshness, and other bad experience with men have driven her to a suppressed homosexuality. In addition to her unacknowledged homosexuality, her other memories such as her mother's affair with her uncle in a summer house, which eventually caused her mother's death in a hotel fire, also take on special significance in Freud's reading, illuminated by the fantastic imagery of the poem and journal. The poem and journal for Freud are not only symbolic but also therapeutic: they are examples of "the unconscious preparing the psyche for the eventual release of repressed ideas into consciousness," thus moving the patient toward psychological health through "the acceptance of the unalterable past" (128). Freud's

technique of treatment is to evoke anamnesis. Freud says, "When we set out to form an opinion about the causation of a pathological state such as hysteria, we begin by adopting the method of anamnestic investigation: we question the patient or those about him in order to find out to what harmful influences they themselves attribute his having fallen ill and developed these neurotic symptoms."²³ When Freud believes that he has discovered the anamnestic meaning of the poem and the journal, his treatment of Lisa is finished: "I told her I thought she was cured of everything but life, so to speak" (127).

While it is supposed to be based on Freud's scientific theories of the human mind, the narrative box "Frau Anna G." actually provides a detailed demonstration of Freud as critical reader, an interpreter in the act of trans(re)lating the most perplexing, complicated human fantasy and dreams into a coherent and significant text. His case history re-marks, in other words, a duality, if not a contradiction, in Freud's investigative attitude. On the one hand, Freud insists on the scientific nature of his psychoanalysis: he is in search of a objective cause in personal history, an early event in the past that influences human psyche through a method of detached "objective" observation. Freud believes that behind the

uncanny network of memories, fantasies and dreams of the unconscious lies a clue of hidden, yet recoverable evidence. But on the other hand, Freud's investigation seems not so much the scientist's search for facts as the critic's determination to discover the obscured meaning of a baffling text. His intriguing analysis seems to constitute an implicit hermeneutics of how to read and how reading proceeds. Taken together they constitute the characteristic Freudian activity of constantly recontextualizing and resignifying the unconscious in a process of (re)discovering a coherent meaning in an apparently complicated text. If the whole novel can be regarded as a De Manian "allegory of reading," Freud's "onion-peeling technique of psychoanalysis"²⁴ that David Cowart has noticed, then, is only analogous to the novel's Chinese box strategy whereby every solid ground always yields new layers of meaning and significance in our reading and re-reading process.

Freud's psychoanalysis is not merely a science but an art of language that calls forth the ancient "magic power of words." In the context that is provided by his theories of psychoanalysis, Freud has made sense of Lisa's neuronomic dreams and fantasies. The way in which the Chinese box strategy works allows Freud to bring out at least a symbolic meaning of

Lisa's texts. Freud says, "the repressed idea creates its own apt symbol. The psyche of an hysteric is like a child who has a secret, which no one must know, but everyone must guess . . . for the unconscious is a precise and even pedantic symbolist" (91). With great imaginative skill, Freud reads and interprets the symbolism of Lisa's unconscious; he repudiates rigid conventional understanding of symbols in his quest for new way of interpretation. Actually, Freud's peerless imaginative interpretation of symbolism must make the most talented critics ashamed of their own poor imagination. For example, Freud's interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the "white hotel" is very impressive:

There is no need to attempt to apply a rigid classification of its symbols, as some students have done. . . . what is more to the points is the overall feeling of the white hotel, its wholehearted commitment to orality--sucking, biting, eating, gorging, taking in, with all the blissful narcissism of a baby at the breast. Here is the oceanic oneness of the child's first years, the auto-erotic paradise, the map of our first country of love--thrown off with all the belle indifference of an hysteric. (105)

According to Terence Cave's argument, Freud's psychoanalysis should be regarded as "the late flowering of the introspective and reflexive turn taken by imaginative writing of many kinds from the late eighteenth century onwards." "The attempt to turn the ghost story and the horror story of the psyche into

a science," in Cave's opinion, "was and remains a major event, even a decisive one, but it is safer nowadays not to take it at face value."²⁵

Actually, Freud as a master interpreter of symbols may remind us of some contemporary imaginative critics--those who translate text into pre-text and then read for their own interpretations rather than restore the meaning of the works they discuss. They have produced numerous imaginative and amazing interpretations: Roland Barthes on Honoré de Balzac, Jacques Derrida on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Jacques Lacan on Edgar Allan Poe, Shoshana Felman on Henry James, etc. Similar to those critics, Freud works from the premise that everything is a sign/symbol and every sign/symbol is subject to (re)interpretation. As Jacques Lacan says, "Let [the psychoanalyst] be well acquainted with the whorl into which his period draws him in the continued enterprise of Babel, and let him be aware of his function as interpreter in the discord of languages."²⁶ It is no wonder that Freud called himself a "conquistador" of signs: he reigns with a special power interpretation over a kingdom of signs/symbols, which encompasses all of human unconscious behaviours and actions. But if there is one thing that The White Hotel has most usefully taught us, it is the post-Freudian suspicion and

refusal of this last word in the interpretive process, the refusal of any privileged position in the kingdom of analysis. Derrida always warns us to be cautious that if every sign/symbol is subject to re-interpretation, every interpretation is overdetermined, including his own. In "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," Derrida points out:

There are thus two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of play. The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering, a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign. . . . The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, through the history of metaphysics or of onto-theology--in other words, throughout his entire history--has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and end of play.²⁷

The question of scientific validity of Freud's psychoanalysis, therefore, is implied in Thomas's novel as the rhetoric of interpretation that identifies truth with empiric scientificity. From Derrida's perspective, the error of Freud's interpretation seems to lie in his blind acceptance of "origin and end of play." But similar to Freud's psychoanalysis, Derrida's grammatological meta-analysis also focuses on the treatment of writing as a "revelatory symptom." The White Hotel challenges Freud's psychoanalysis as well as Derrida's meta-analysis. Thomas's manipulation of various

interpretations and perspectives seems to be a tour de force performance that goes beyond Derrida's concept of "overdetermination." What The White Hotel reveals is the limitation of all interpretations, both scientific and grammatological.

Actually, Freud never draws an exclusive line between psychoanalysis and literature. In spite of his overwhelming reputation as a "scientist," Freud always claims that literature is trans-related to his psychoanalysis: "Creative writers are valuable allies and their evidence is to be prized highly, for they are apt to know a whole host of things between heaven and earth of which our philosophy has not yet let us dream."²⁸ Probably what Freud learns from "creative writers" is their valuable "creative" method of interpretation that establishes an interactive trans-relation between the two--if literature provides apt examples for Freud's theory, his psychoanalysis also helps literary criticism. As Thomas shows in The White Hotel, Freud's basic method is to mix the unconscious and text, and to regard the former as something out there, to be interpreted, independent of our systems of perception including language. As Harold Bloom says, however, "After Nietzsche and Freud, it is not possible to return wholly to a mode of interpretation that seeks to restore

meaning to texts."²⁹ We all attempt to create a meaning from a text--a misreading, a fiction, as some people say. If all readings are misreadings, all understandings can be seen as special cases of misunderstanding,³⁰ and all interpretations are misinterpretations.

Another interesting question that arises from Freud's case history is related to the nature of psychoanalytical treatment and the perspective of our judgement: if Lisa is really "cured of everything," as Freud insists, how does his psychoanalysis cure? As Lisa says to Freud: "'You tell me that my illness is probably connected with early events in my life that I have forgotten. But even if that is so, you can't alter those events in any way. How do you propose to help me, then?'" (115). Psychoanalysis, according to Freud, is a treatment by measures which "operate in the first instance and immediately upon the human mind. Foremost among such measures is the use of words; and words are the essential tool of mental treatment."³¹ Psychoanalytical treatment, then, is a "talking cure," which presumably means that the literary text has a therapeutic value. It seems that psychoanalysis should invoke the magic power of a dialogic catharsis. It is well known that this position was developed by Jacques Lacan in his effort to re-discover what appeared to him as the "original"

meaning of Freud's discovery. Lacan says, "psychoanalysis has only one medium: the patient's speech; . . . there is no speech without a reply, even if it is met only with silence, provided that it has an auditor."³² As Malcolm Bowie observes in Freud, Proust and Lacan: Theory as Fiction, "literature, for Lacan, is a Protean object of desire and . . . his theoretical texts sometimes become overwrought in their attempts to trap and devour it."³³ Psychoanalysis, in Lacan's revised version, is nothing but an art of language which returns to the magic act of speech.³⁴ As Lacan's most famous aphorism runs, "the unconscious is structured like a language."³⁵ Similar to literary interpretation, psychoanalysis attempts at the liberating power of language. In this sense, if Lisa is cured, she is cured by Freud's language that liberates her "repressed idea" (91). Although this kind of psychoanalysis pays great attention to the rhetorical aspect of psychic operations, the power of language evoked by psychoanalysis is limited, and this limitation is soon revealed in the following textual box that provides a totally different context and perspective for the same material of Lisa's life.

In the next part of the novel, Thomas presents a totally different narrative box, "The Health Resort," a biographical

narrative which offers a new story of Lisa's life. Before he closes his case study, Freud writes, "I told her I thought she was cured of everything but life, so to speak" (127). It seems that "Frau Anna G." is another successful example of Freud's psychoanalytical treatment, and "The Health Resort" will follow Freud's prediction to describe how Lisa return to a normal happy life. But, on the contrary, "The Health Resort" offers a new version of Lisa's life, which challenges Freud's analysis and starts to subvert all his previous interpretations. As mentioned earlier, Thomas's Chinese box strategy draws attention to the coexistence, interaction and interdependence of different perspectives and relatively autonomous consciousnesses. Probably what makes The White Hotel so impressive is just the convergence of contradictory versions/visions; while the novel presents a Freudian perspective, it also establishes counter-perspectives. Freud's interpretation of Lisa's writing, which leads to his diagnosis and treatment for what he sees as her hysterical symptoms, sounds logical, but it is limited and fails to present a comprehensive picture of Lisa's life; as a result, his psychoanalytical interpretation is challenged by a different, biographical perspective.

Thus, "The Health Resort" establishes a new perspective and excavates a remarkable depth of contextual strata by introducing more information about Lisa. It is in this narrative box that we learn for the first time the real name of the protagonist. As we know, Freud changes her name in his case history to protect her privacy, but the name change marks other significance in the context of Thomas's novel. The revelation of her real name in "The Health Resort" points to the fact that in Freud's case history we get a version/vision of Lisa Erdman, a Lisa screened by Freud's perspective, but there is much more about Lisa than what Freud's case history presents. In "The Health Resort" we start to view Lisa from a new perspective that is not affected by Freud's interpretation. In a complex process of re-vision that collapses subject into multiplicity, stasis into mobility, Freud has lost his formerly privileged position as the only authoritative interpreter of Lisa's life. It is surprising that the Lisa of "The Health Resort" is so different from the Lisa of "Frau Anna G." This surprising differences confirms the argument that the case history is only a Freud's subjective interpretation of Lisa, not Lisa herself. In creating his own text of the case history "Frau Anna G.," Freud is shaping our responses to Lisa's writing, and fixing

Lisa identity to a certain point of perception. His selection of details, his choice of perspective, and above all his commitment to the principles of his symbolic interpretation make Lisa to some degree a "make-believe" (re)creation of his. The convergence of contradictory visions such as the psychoanalytical and biographical and their competing modes of interpretation help us see Lisa more fully as a multi-faceted subject. The gain in knowledge of her full identity is then cumulative and only comes from the juxtaposition of perspectives.

One of the means whereby Thomas achieves cumulative juxtaposition is the deliberate assimilation into the text of multiple and ostensibly contradictory versions/visions of certain core enigmas. Alternate ways of viewing and interpreting these enigmas always remain as possibilities that stretch and breach the boundaries of narrative boxes. Any interpretation implies the adoption of a limited and limiting perspective; and any one perspective, of course, cannot be exhaustive to be absolute valid. In "Frau Anna G.," Freud implies the limitation of his psychoanalysis when he says: "No analysis is ever complete; the hysterics have more roots than a tree" (127). One of the enigmas Freud cannot decipher from his perspective, for instance, is the specificity of Lisa's

pains, mysteriously confined to her left breast and ovary. He attempts at several conjectures, but none of them is satisfactory. At the late stage of his analysis, Freud admits his inability to bring the cause of "the left-sidedness" to the surface from the dark memory (127). Freud's inability and the limitation of his interpretation naturally encourage us to seek a different or larger perspective for these enigmas through recontextualizing, analytic deconstruction.

Thomas's novel, then, takes on a hermeneutical feature, with each individual perspective as an autonomous consciousness operating within what is essentially its particular exegesis of Lisa's text or rather textualized Lisa. Against Nietzsche's perspectivism, which postulates that "there is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective 'knowing,'" ³⁶ Thomas's Chinese box strategy constructs a democracy of perspectives, with Lisa as an enigmatic centre to be interpreted. Thomas's main concern in The White Hotel seems to be with the modes of perception and with interpreting those perceptions. This concern manifests itself directly in "The Health Resort," where we are confronted with enigmatic phenomena about Lisa which Freud is unable to explain, such as Lisa's gift of telepathy. Freud cannot perceive any possible link between the "telepathic powers" and the meaning of her

writings and dreams. Later Freud admits to a belief in telepathy, but never takes seriously Lisa's ability to predict his future or her own. In his letter to Lisa, with appropriate professional politeness, Freud refuses to consider the problem of telepathy further: "My experience of psychoanalysis has convinced me that telepathy exists. If I had my life to go over again, I should devote it to the study of this factor. It is clear that you are especially sensitive. You must not let it distress you unduly" (175).

Freud's inability to decipher these enigmas set limits to his authority as an interpreter. As George Levine has observed, Freud's analysis "is clever, if not brilliant, but its function in the narrative is precisely not to be adequate."³⁷ The barrier that prevents Freud from seeing Lisa's poem and journal as "telephatic" prophecies is his narrow perspective that allows Freud to admit only the connection between Lisa's symptoms and her private past, specifically her childhood memories. His interpretation of Lisa's fear of motherhood clearly reflects Freud's "looking-backward-only" attitude. In his case history, Freud says that "I have no comment on Frau Anna's 'prediction'" (102). Freud takes her fear of motherhood as a symptom related to her homosexuality, and attempts to discover its underlying cause

not in the future but in her past. Freud refuses to consider "future," because he equates prophecy with "mysticism." Finally, Freud admits that the problem of prophesying is beyond his professional field, relating it to mysticism in which he never believes. As some critics have pointed out, the problem of "mysticism" indicates a "tension" that can be identified as the rivalry between Freud and Jung, which is introduced in the "Prologue" by Sandor Ferenczi's letter. Ferenczi writes, "there has been a little tension between Jung and Freud" (9), which is particularly obvious in "a moment" when these two persons have different reactions towards "a midsummer mist descended almost at once": Jung interprets the mist as a symbolic "prehistoric monster" prophesying that "we were slipping back into the primeval past," while Freud "teases him for being a Christian, and therefore mystical (a fate he regards the Jews as having escaped!)" (9). Obviously, Freud and Jung represent different principles of interpretation: Freud bases his analysis on sexuality and past memories, while Jung emphasizes collective archetypes and prophecy of the future. According to Rowland Wymer, the rivalry is inscribed as a central conflict in the novel: "It is a feature of Thomas's artistic strategy that the Jungian challenge to Freud should seem to arise naturally from the

development of the story."³⁸ But the critical question that Wymer does not answer is why Thomas includes such a Jungian perspective. While it is true that some passages in the novel sound indeed "Jungian-like," the novel by no means endorses or privileges the Jungian position.

Unlike Freud's interpretation that is fully developed in "Frau Anna G.," Jung's approach is not textually realized--there is no particular narrative box devoted to the Jungian perspective; rather, it is only corroborated by the novel's structure. The inscription of both Freudian and Jungian perspectives, to my mind, is only part of Thomas's ambitious strategy in which all opposed perspectives are pulled into a complex work where nothing is accessible along a monological line, whether it is Freudian or Jungian. In other words, the main function of the Jungian perspective is to decentre the text and to liberate the reader from the "make-believe" world of Freud's psychoanalysis. But the Jungian perspective does not replace Freudian analysis as valid and dominant perspective in "The Health Resort"; and other alternative perspectives and contexts are expected to follow, such as the socio-historical.

So, in addition to those "mysterious" phenomena that evoke Jungian mysticism, "The Health Resort" also provides

essential information about the social context in which Lisa's hysteric symptoms should be viewed. One of the important things of which we become aware in this narrative box is Lisa's Jewish heritage, which is neglected in the earlier narrative boxes. In a letter to Freud, Lisa reveals some previously withheld information on a horrible incident that has strong lasting influence:

There was even a disgusting organization advocating the extermination of the Jews as a race. My father gave me one of their pamphlets to read, as part of my "education" in being a member of a persecuted clan. But I only learnt of such things later, after my baptism on the ship. The sailors saw my father as a filthy exploiter (perhaps I was), and didn't even know he was politically on their side. They spat on me, threatened to burn my breasts with their cigarettes, used vile language I'd never heard. They forced me to commit acts of oral sex with them, saying all I was good for, as a dirty Jewess, was to--but you'll guess the expression they used. (168)

This additional information overthrows Freud's previous analysis as a misinterpretation, since Lisa's malady has been influenced by her experience as a Jewish girl, which affects her relation with her father and later with her anti-Semitic husband. The emphasis on Lisa's Jewish heritage and anti-Semitism indicates the need to understand sociality rather than sexuality as implicated in the production of human consciousness and unconsciousness which constitute identity. Probably it is Lisa's fear of her Jewish background that

unconsciously "create" a wished memory of her mother's affair with her uncle--she wishes that she were the child of her mother and her uncle, since they are not Jewish. Lisa writes:

That brings me to the night when I remembered the summer-house incident, and perhaps other incidents. For a few moments I was filled with happiness! Do you understand? I was convinced that my father wasn't my father, I wasn't Jewish, and I could live with my husband and get pregnant, with a clear conscience! (170)

Thus Lisa leads us to a different interpretation of her troubled relation with her husband and her fear of motherhood that has nothing to do with homosexuality. Lisa's re-interpretation of her own experience highlights the inadequacy of Freud's mis-interpretation, which results from his inability to recognize what R. D. Laing has called "the interrelatedness of psychological phenomena and the essential features of the society in which they arise."³⁹

Freud's authoritative position has been totally subverted in "The Health Resort," where he is transformed from an authoritative reader into a *dramatis personae*, enlisting himself as a character in the novelistic drama. This transformation is suggested by Thomas in the "Author's Note"--"Freud becomes one of the *dramatis personae*" (5), and it is dramatically staged in "The Health Resort." Apart from the three letters from him, which serve as his counter-

interpretation against Lisa's re-interpretation with a firm refusal to revise the case history, Freud is no longer available to interpret Lisa's life. In other words, if Lisa's life is seen as text,⁴⁰ the psychoanalyst finds himself incorporated into the very text he is seeking to elucidate. It seems that Freud abandons his position of interpreter in the audience in order to seek a position of performer on the stage. Bound no longer to an authoritative origin, the text spreads itself across its many incarnations in Lisa's life--finally including the psychoanalyst himself among its personae. From an analyst or critical reader, Freud becomes an analysand, a text that we are (re)reading and (re)interpreting. Both Freud's psychoanalytic perspective and Lisa's socio-biographical point of view have very well been integrated in the novel's Chinese box strategy which translates various perspectives. These perspectives are interdependent in relation to each other, and each has its relative autonomy in relation to the whole. Similar to the other novels discussed earlier, The White Hotel creates a disturbing frame-break effect: it manages to offer both a vision/version, such as Freud's psychoanalytic reading of Lisa, and then, a re-vision/re-version of it through a pluralizing multivalency of perspectives. Relativity is the

implicit and constitutive factor that not only unifies the totality but also specifies each narrative in its relative autonomy. The reader is, as a result, required to perform successive acts of resignification and recontextualization of previously established meanings.

Thomas's Chinese box strategy requires that each textual box we have already read be re-viewed in the following box and re-evaluated in its new contexts; moreover, the wild play with various perspectives suggests a textualized refusal of any single interpretative centre. The narrative unity within each narrative box or with each perspective is always disrupted by the start of another narrative with a different perspective. The image of Thomas's writing, to use Edward Said's words, changes from one of "unique inscribing" to one of "parallel script."⁴¹ One direct result from such a "parallel script" in The White Hotel is that the centre of the text is constantly displaced and dispersed by the disconcerting plurality which trans-relates multiple perspectives. The reader may have a dizzy feeling that in Thomas's novel what is constantly turning or rotating is not the scene or actors, but the whole stage--the foundation of the novel and the centre of the text. At all times, the text seems provisional and ready to accept the possibility of

reconstruction. At the end of "The Health Resort," we realize that the cause of Lisa's "left-sided" pain cannot be found in the past, since it is related to the events that will happen in the "future." As Freud suggests to Lisa,

No doubt fate would find it easier than I do to relieve you of your illness. But much will be gained if we succeed in turning your hysterical misery into common unhappiness. (115-16)

As the novel shows, Lisa's pain indeed coincides with the "common unhappiness" of an "hysterical" period of the twentieth century, although "fate" is not an accurate term to describe such a coincidence. In this view, the future events in the next narrative box, "The Sleeping Carriage," seem to be the reenactment of Lisa's hysterical dream/drama within a historical context.

The dramatic situation in "The Sleeping Carriage" is the Babi Yar massacre. As this narrative box reveals, the real cause of Lisa's pain is not to be found in her individual sexual past, but rather in her collective suffering or "common unhappiness" as a Jew in one of the most violent periods in modern history. The mysterious relation between Lisa's hysteric fantasy and the violence and horror in history provides another perspective for our interpretation of Lisa's mythic entity. Like Saleem Sinai in Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children⁴² or the mythic woman in Pynchon's V,⁴³

Lisa seems to have a special sense that make her experience future pain and violence in her fantasy and dreams. In other words, her poem and journal have revealed themselves as proleptic prognostication -- the fantastic fire, mass death and burial are all trans(re)lated vividly into history. At the end of "The Sleeping Carriage," we understand why Thomas emphasizes Lisa's Jewish heritage. The fantasies, dreams and neurotic sufferings, which Freud attempts to interpret in terms of the individual's unconscious, private past and repressed sexuality, are represented here to be a mythical, collective (un)conscious performance of history. Lisa's personal identity is lost in a complex, self-transgressive network of historical trans-relations, which transform Lisa's death at Babi Yar into a picture of universal tragedy. This universal vision is confirmed by Thomas's letter to the Editor of Times Literary Supplement, in which he says, the "heroine, Lisa Erdman, changes from being Lisa an individual to Lisa in history--an anonymous victim."⁴⁴

As Thomas's himself acknowledges, "The Sleeping Carriage" is based on a historical document in A. Anotoli Kuznetsov's Babi Yar, which is about the massacre of Jews at Kiev. The questions for which critics still cannot find satisfactory answers are why Thomas incorporates such a "realistic" history

and how it is related to other parts of the novel. Thomas himself, in a comment on the basic configuration of The White Hotel, emphasize the necessity of trans-relating the seemingly incompatible materials such as Lisa's personal fantasy and the historical reality:

The book began with the poem. In the Ernest Jones biography of Freud, I read that Freud had interviewed--I mean analyzed, that's a funny slip--a woman who claimed to be having an affair with his son. I thought that was a wonderful dramatic idea. So I tried to get inside the voice of the woman to whom this had happened. And the images just came to me from some very pure source. . . . But I didn't know where they were leading until I read the account of Babi Yar. . . . I realized then that the woman, almost certainly having been Jewish, could have ended up at Babi Yar or in the camps.⁴⁵

It appears that, similar to Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children that sublimizes personal experience into historical enactment, The White Hotel is not a psychological or biographical portrait of a woman but a profound exploration of the intricate interrelationship between personal and historical experience, particularly in a age darkened by "hysterical" violence, cruelty, and war. On the second page of the novel, Thomas quotes four lines from Yeats's "Meditations in Time of Civil War" as his epigraph:

We had fed the heart on fantasies,
The heart's grown brutal from the fare;
More substance in our enmities
Than in our love . . . (2)

According to David Cowart, these lines hint that Thomas's novel, like Yeats's poem, "concerns the enmities of the twentieth century and the failure of love."⁴⁶ Actually, with a textual inscription of "Eros in combat with Thanatos" (118), The White Hotel is less concerned with history than with the discourse of historicity. Thomas's heavily con-textualized and delicately structured configuration, with priority given to dialogic strands in the text, is committed beyond mere recapturing history, and beyond mere historical reflection. The incompatibility or discontinuity inscribed in the novel, to my mind, points directly to the form of thinking that seems most central to this book, that is, the puzzling problem we have been pursuing, hermeneutics, the discovery of truth amidst disparate and decontextualized signs and marks. Since Lisa's symptoms radically violate the linear concept of time and turn our accepted causality principle upside down, "history" can no longer "confirm our belief that the present rests upon profound intentions and immutable necessities"⁴⁷; rather, it is intended as a challenge to the logics and perspectives that assert themselves in the previous narrative boxes. So the "a-logical" incompatibility in The White Hotel is actually what Tony Bennett calls "a strategic intervention" which "aims to mobilise the text, to re-determine its

connections with history by severing its existing articulations and forging new ones, actively politicising the process of reading."⁴⁸

Thomas's multiple perspectives provide an answer to the question of Lisa's personality. In contrast to Freud, who sees a unity of the ego, Thomas points to a basic instability of self across unresolvable tensions. It appears that Thomas shares Lacan's view that human psyche is a not cohesive stable entity, but a fragmented illusive product.⁴⁹ Because Lisa's psyche is so pluralistic and complex, the Chinese box strategy implies that any perspective or interpretation is bound to be limited and partial. Lisa cannot be accurately understood or trans(re)lated if any of the perspectives is excluded; and there is no one way of knowing Lisa that is valid all by itself. While Freud's psychoanalysis fails to see the significance of Lisa's Jewish heritage, the historical account in "The Sleeping Carriage" totally neglects Lisa's individual past; neither perspective is complete or totalizing. So The White Hotel is not a sum of isolated parts, but a co-optative whole, that is, a form in which the implicit "dialogue" or "interplay" intervenes between different narrative boxes. What all of these textual boxes do is contest any claim to singularity and originality which the reader might want to

ascribe to Lisa, because Lisa's multiple self-inscriptions and the extensive textual layerings all work to combat any textual centre or fixed identity. As Lisa is constantly positioned, depositioned and repositioned in various con-texts, we have to view Lisa as a woman formed by a variety of (re)visions such as personal, social, and historical. In combining these multiple and contradictory (re)visions, the novel establishes a metaphor of the human psyche as a co-optative Chinese box.

Faced with the hermeneutic problem of dealing with the fragmented narratives and multiple perspectives, the reader might well feel that it is impossible to grasp anything definite in this novel. The Chinese box strategy, constantly recontextualizing and challenging previously established meanings and interpretations, compels us to acknowledge that any suggestion of an absolute truth in the work must be understood as something overdetermined. The multiple contexts and perspectives prevent any totalizing meaning for the protagonist's hysterical symptoms, and simultaneously prevent the reader from finding or taking any authoritative position from which to make coherence of the novel. The extensive layerings of narrative boxes all work to contextualize and to confront the contradictions of trans-related narratives. Throughout the novel, the reader must constantly re-construct

the story, and re-interpret the relations between the story and the narrative discourse that conveys it in such a manner that his interpretation itself demands further re-interpretation. As George Landow argues in his discussion of hypertext, "we must abandon the notion of unitary text and replace it with conceptions of a dispersed text" so that any work will appear as "a dispersed field of variants and not as a falsely unitary entity."⁵⁰ It is the element of "dispersiveness" that specifies the accomplishment of Thomas's Chinese box strategy--the representation of multiplicity and reciprocal transformation of the parts as a result of their interaction. The Chinese box strategy, in other words, entails a decentred point of view by which the world inside the novel is atomized as different and simultaneous perspectives/interpretations between which a dynamical interaction intervenes as the only potential for meaning. From this dynamical interaction emerges a new co-optative form of articulation/ actualization of totality that acknowledges as well as heals the dissociated sensibility of modern culture.

II

The soul of man is a far country, which
cannot be approached or explored.

"Sigmund Freud"

The White Hotel (174)

The last section of D. M. Thomas's The White Hotel, "The Camp," which is a puzzle to many readers, seems to be a trans-spiritual narrative about the souls and their lives in heaven. When he concludes the account of Lisa's tragic death at Babi Yar, Thomas writes that "But all of this had nothing to do with the guest, the soul, the lovesick bride, the daughter of Jerusalem" (222). Such a mysterious life-after-death ending calls out some disapproving responses, even from readers and scholars who have otherwise praised the novel very highly. Most critics are not against the trans-spiritual suggestion,

but they doubt the artistic necessity of such a transc-ending. According to Walter Sullivan, for instance, the ending structurally "mars" the novel: "In my judgment the final chapter, short though it is, mars the structure of the novel and erodes the power that is generated by the circumstances of Lisa's death."⁵¹ To other critics, who have finally found a sense of narrative coherence and conclusion in the traditional omniscient narrative after the puzzling un-novelistic letters, fantasies, and psychoanalysis, the last narrative box looks incongruous. Lars Ole Sauerberg says, "Had Thomas chosen to finish the account after the blood bath of Babi Yar, he would at least have achieved a kind of tragic unity."⁵² Unfortunately, Thomas's ending narrative box does not satisfy Sauerberg's expectations of a realistic fictional universe; out of frustration, Sauerberg asserts that Thomas "fails to create a satisfying fictional form."⁵³

Sullivan's "judgment" and Sauerberg's frustration, obviously, derive from their metaphysical failure to recognize the co-optative function of the final box, which is both the ending and a new beginning of The White Hotel. This novel is not written for any first reading or vision: the composition of the book--its structure--insists upon transc-ending spatiality, which becomes clear only with re-reading or re-

viewing. In this view, the concluding box can be seen as controlling our re-understanding of the novel in its entirety. The final box is a new beginning of what literary theorists call the "hermeneutic" circle or recursion. The timeless realm presented in this box re-introduces as well as transcends the "oneiric space" of the poem in the beginning of the novel. It deftly closes the dialectic between the social and the psychological in the previous narrative boxes, but most importantly it provides a new context and a higher level of spiral for re-viewing the total meaning of the novel. In other words, it does not draw any conclusion; instead, it requires the reader to restart the process of re-reading and resignifying previously established meanings.

Thomas himself insists that "The Camp" is a necessary completion of The White Hotel. For this baffling final narrative is in outline a self-reflexive mise en abyme box that structurally and thematically completes Lisa Erdman's story, which we can never fully understand until we read the novel at least for the second time. For example, one important revelation in "The Camp" is a final version/vision of the summer house story--the central enigma in this novel. This is the story embedded in the story--a subtle form of the Chinese box strategy. Throughout the novel, we are told this

story at least five times by "Frau Anna G.", Magda, Lisa, and, Lisa's mother; upon a second trans-reading of the novel, we find that this story is also presented in the fantastical poem and the Gastein journal. In other words, this is a story viewed from several different perspectives that have produced contradictory versions/visions and interpretations. This amplification of points of view and multiplication of versions/visions have generated not only a curiosity as to who is telling the truth, but also a doubt about the ineluctable fictivity of all versions/visions. Thomas's Chinese box strategy first puts into question the unity of human perceptive experience; then it allows us to comprehend that every single vision intrinsically dissimulates the truth of that story.

We first notice the story in Freud's case history "Frau Anna G.," where Lisa gives two slightly different versions of the incident. She first says the lovers she sees in the summer house are her Aunt Magda, her mother's twin, and her Uncle Franz (99). But during the course of Freud's analysis, Lisa "revises" the incident and reveals that it is not her aunt and uncle she has seen in the summer house but her mother and uncle (121). This re-vision pushes Freud's interpretation into the direction of relating this incident to Lisa's unacceptable

homosexuality. Later in her letter to Freud, Lisa implies that her fear of her Jewish blood and social pressure probably make her create the second version/vision of the summer-house incident, since she wishes that her father were not Jewish (170). A different version/vision of the summer house story is then provided by Magda, who reveals that the incident that is the central memory in Lisa's childhood is actually a "trio" that involves three persons--Lisa's mother, aunt and uncle. Magda tells Lisa that at her husband's "kind" suggestion, they sometimes invite Marya, Lisa's mother, to join them in bed, since Lisa's mother and father has "had a white marriage for a long time" (165-66). Magda's version of the summer house incident helps Lisa establish a logical relation between the summer house incident and her mother's death in a hotel fire. But Magda's version that is supposed to illuminates the truth of the incident also blurs every version/vision, because all the versions/visions are now contradictory to one another. When Marya tells her version of the summer house in "The Camp," it is clear that Magda's confession to Lisa years before is false. According to Marya, because Magda's "desires ran in an entirely different direction," Magda was "quite relieved" by her sister's affair with her husband (234). The mother's revelation to the daughter here is another re-vision

or re-creation of the same story, which indicates an endless hermeneutical recursion. The trans-relation between these (re)versions/(re)visions produces a rebounding circularity, a hall-of-mirrors effect. All version/visions are re-versions/re-visions; all findings are refindings; all presentations are re-presentations; and all interpretations must be re-interpreted. And this suggests the central concern of Thomas's novel--the function and implication of re-re-visionism.

By directing the reader through various re-visions in the multi-layered Chinese box strategy, the novel presents a good example of textual heterarchy of simultaneity. Through repetition or recreation of the same story, we experience a-logical re-re-iteration: we have memory and re-visions of memory, clarification and re-clarification of the previous clarifications, interpretation and re-interpretation of former interpretations. The multiple visions and re-visions co-optate, to use Robert R. Wilson's term, "a shrinking-in-replication horizon" in the novel. With the exuberant Dallenbachian mise en abyme, Thomas deranges the usual certainty of expressive art in order to unburden and unfalsify the nature of human vision, reducing everything extratextual to a purely textual positionality. The reader is led to many

tentative visions and hypostatization, but the novel never comes down completely in endorsement of any side of the multiplicity. In The White Hotel, the visional multiplicity reflects the instability of the fictional world as viewed from different perspectives as well as from various levels of spiralling recursion. Images and stories constantly recur in confused regression of re-re-vision; the contradictory and incomplete presentation and re-presentation reduce almost everything rendered or re-rendered merely to a viewing positionality in a (con)text.

Thus, The White Hotel, like other Chinese box works discussed earlier, is not a novel of regular spatial presentation whose contradictory visions will eventually be re-ordered and re-apprehended as a coherent vision. Here the summer house story is presented as broken visions; the reader, encouraged by a few clues to hope coherence will emerge, will retain in his memory the cross-referents of the incident in vain--any attempt to connect the contradictory versions/visions and re-versions/re-visions leads to paradox and fragmentation. The contradictory nature of (re)visions of key events and characters in the novel conveys the presence of a recursive hermeneutic puzzle evoked by the Chinese box strategy. In Brian McHale's words, "The consequence of all

these disquieting puzzles and paradoxes is to foreground the ontological dimensions of the Chinese box of fiction."⁵⁴ There is a sense that we cannot totally apprehend an "ontological" coherence in the novel because even the visions of a simple event are presented in recursion by narrative voices whose perspective is moving: all versions/visions seem to exist recursively in our consciousness--the "'demon' of repetition in our lives" (117), coming into focus in the persistently repetitive manner of memory, which records events spatially and in their interaction with other events. The importance of the versions/visions, therefore, is no longer related to their place or truth-value in a real world out there but only to their trans-positions in the inner world of a vision.

The recurring re-visions in the novel achieve a plurality of meanings through the (re)presentations that are counterpoised in the text. Some of the motifs and relationships, such as the train trips, create a plurality made up of all these parts as the reader compares them, considering them all together simultaneously, not just one after the other. In other words, of the several perspectives from which we see the summer house incident, no one of them negates any of the others: they all contain part of the truth.

Each version/vision provides another context for our interpretation of what has happened in the summer house, and as a result, enlarges our sense of the possibilities in re-interpreting the novel as a whole. In fact, the process of constantly re-visioning the summer house incident metafictionally reflects the process of our re-reading and re-interpreting the novel. By continually blurring the distinctions between true visions and false visions, between reality and dream, fantasy and hallucination, The White Hotel renders the ontological status of what it depicts uncertain. Because of being relativistic and partial, one perspective, however intriguing and important, may leave some things out of a vision, which might clearly be perceived from a different standpoint. A mono-vision work usually accepts the vision that appears to us in a certain position, and presents it as the only reliable reality, because "seeing is believing." But in Thomas's novel, we discover that our eyes can deceive us, and that things do look different to different people. Through the rendering of numerous contradictory perspectives, the traditional Jamesian "point of view," as a facet of a text, becomes only an inescapable empty view in Thomas's novel. By stressing interaction and contradiction, The White Hotel calls the "point of view" into question as a limited vision of

everything. The endless re-visioning in search of a ceaselessly retreating and metamorphosing truth in the summer house incident helps the reader gain a degree of co-optative sophistication that the Jamesian concept of point of view cannot afford. And it amounts to a further achievement in decentring to realize that, outside all the vantage points of all the individual visions, there may be a constantly and asymptotically approachable framework of reality; but we cannot always see it directly--perhaps never.

What Thomas's Chinese box strategy has been leading up to is the idea that for a literary work aspiring to be comprehensive and true it is necessary to entertain multiple critical perspectives. As Michel Riffaterre argues, "Reading is also unstable, and the interpretation is never final."⁵⁵ Generally speaking, the entire literary process, can be understood to include all meaning and functioning appertaining to the text and context of that particular work. Thomas's "synthesis of visions" can clearly be explained by Gilles Deleuze's theory of writing as an "assemblage." Deleuze defines an assemblage as a multiplicity made up of many heterogeneous terms and relations that somehow function together, as in a symbiosis or sympathy.⁵⁶ In contrast to a mono-vision work, which defines relations among homogeneous

elements and functions, a Chinese box novel is formed of trans-relations, interactions, co-optations, and affiliations among and across an array of heterogeneous elements and processes. A Chinese box novel therefore may not possess a unified vision, but it can achieve a kind of visional totality. In The White Hotel, Thomas creates his novel as a large Chinese box, a symbol that may be said to have formed a multiple realities of the world, which always look different in different contexts.

In Thomas's paradoxical Chinese box, everything is both "to be" and "not to be." "Frau Anna G." is and is not Lisa Erdman of the second half of the novel; the woman in the summer house is and is not Marya; Magda is and is not homosexual; Thomas's Freud is and is not the historical Freud; the white hotel is the place where we are supposed to live, but it is also eternally somewhere inside us. Everything is relative and everything is reflected and distorted, because each vision necessarily focuses on a specific aspect or a certain state of things, which cannot be viewed from every possible angle at once. The Chinese box strategy highlights the contradictory and mysterious nature of human vision, suggesting that if we accept just one vision, one interpretation, or one presentation, part of the story/meaning

will be lost. Now looking back at Freud's writings through the prism of the multi-layered reciprocity as suggested by the mise en abyme summer house story, we can see clearly that what Freud was blind to was the unavoidable necessity and presence of "countertransference," to use the term of post-Freudian psychoanalysis, "the effects of the analyst's own unconscious needs and conflicts on his understanding or technique."⁵⁷ In literary terms, we may say that the text to be analyzed foregrounds the entrapment of narration in the story it tells. As we can see in Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!, the Chinese box strategy makes Quentin and Shreve construct and reconstruct the story of Henry Sutpen and Charles Bon in order to understand the unknown both outside and inside themselves. The deep unconscious that is revealed here is that any vision or construction of the story is simply a position within a specific assemblage of con-texts, which signifies a relationship of "countertransference." In Thomas's novel, the possibility of changing the viewing position of the subject within a discursive heterarchy indicates that both form and meaning are produced in a dynamism of mobile positionality, which undermines authority and invites multiplicity. Throughout the novel, we are shown the limitations of the privileging mono-position, whether Freudian, Jungian, social,

political, historical or spiritual. Essentially, the Chinese box strategy of the novel is intentionally decentring and ultimately regenerative. Through the reimposition of mise en abyme re-vision in the final narrative box, the text revises itself again; authorities are collapsed so that expressions of truth may proliferate.

The final narrative box, therefore, revises our first reading of the novel. When we re-read The White Hotel, we discover that the text itself actually operates within a regressive multiplicity. As the vision in the final narrative box indicates, each event is shaped by multiple determinants and each of our readings is merely an act of "overdetermination." The re-visionism required by the Chinese box strategy seems to emphasize the postmodern notion that meaning depends on the contingent, the haphazard, and the chance. This notion is expressed by Derrida in his criticism of "overdetermination"--everything is overdetermined, and every meaning supplements.⁵⁸ "This structure of 'supplementarity'," Derrida says, "undermines the logic of identity, of a clear distinction between A and not-A."⁵⁹ Thomas's manipulation of context and perspectives, however, seems in most respects a tour de force performance that goes beyond, or plays with Derrida's concepts of

"overdetermination" and "supplements," concepts that subject themselves to the process of overdetermination and further supplements. The Chinese box strategy in The White Hotel reveals the paradoxical or oxymoronic aspect of all overdetermined visions or re-visions. If every event is shaped by multiple determinants, then overdetermination itself must be the necessary channel leading to truth. If every vision has a chance access to truth, the Chinese box strategy will lead us to see a kind of encompassing truth that derives from a coalescence of various re-visions, re-version and re-interpretations. Actually, what the Chinese box strategy illustrates in Thomas's work is not the possibility of overdetermination in a vision or re-vision, but the difficulty of re-determining in an already overdetermined cultural discourse, such as the enormous difficulty of re-determining any meaning for text, history or literature. While a historian may overdetermine history by reconstructing an external truth based on documental facts, a psychoanalyst may attempt to present an inner truth by presenting the detached description of an ego. But Thomas doubts that either the historian or the psychoanalyst could ever establish any truth. When he breaks the spell of overdetermination, however, he is faced with the extreme difficulty of re-determining truth. What he tries to

do is to unmask the self-deceiving fictions of all visions through multiplicity and simultaneity. Although his Chinese box strategy initially functions to reveal the fictivity of overdetermined "reality," the novel does at last arrive at a stage of illumination that brings the truths and fictions of all possible determinants to light. The Chinese box strategy, therefore, becomes the potent strategy to overcome all static states of overdetermination and achieve a mobility of re-determination.

The recursion of re-determination is characteristic of all Chinese box novels. In his book Reading for the Plot, Peter Brooks provides an interesting description of a "flawed" variation of the Chinese box strategy. For Brooks, Conrad's Heart of Darkness is "flawed," because the borderlines between the narrative levels are so blurred that the reader can never find where outer boxes end or where the inner boxes start. Therefore, Heart of Darkness evokes a process of re-determinations, retellings, re-visions, re-interpretations--a series of attempts to make sense out of Marlow's trip to unravel the mystery of Kurtz. Thus every reader can be regarded as a "Marlow" involved in the expedition to decipher the central enigma--a repeating, recursive process of re-determination.⁶⁰ The structure that Brooks sees as "flawed"

is actually a normal situation in postmodern Chinese box fiction. In The White Hotel, as we have seen, successive re-versions and re-visions and re-interpretations and re-determinations embody the reader's continuous attempt, like Marlow's, to penetrate the central mystery, while never quite succeeding. This failure to achieve an acceptable interpretation is manifested by the emergence of still another critique; when this fails, it too is followed by its successor, and so on, ad infinitum. As a result of this central ambiguity, the story will never cease to be retold and re-interpreted. It should be noted that this recursive re-determination is closely related to the countertransferential interpretations mentioned above, because it often happens that during the process of the recursive re-determination the subject of the interpretation becomes the object of the interaction, and the response to an interpretation will be used to further support the claim of re-interpretation, just as we did throughout our reading and re-reading of The White Hotel.

Through the process of recursive re-determination, the reader may be slowly beginning to realize that what Thomas's Chinese box strategy actually challenges is the ever-spiralling recursions of the re-re-determining search itself.

This is the same challenge that post-Freudian psychoanalysts are forced to meet--whether we should be content with appearances or stop at a certain level of analysis. "Sometimes a good cigar is just a good cigar"--this is probably one of most important Freudian statements people have ignored, as some contemporary psychoanalysts would say.⁶¹ This agnostic stance, widely called "post-Freudian crisis," is definitely threatening. Some critics fear that to begin to admit that for some things there is no authentic interpretation and that some objects are devoid of meaning is to come face to face with a potential intellectual crisis. Probably this crisis will be one of the major crises in human history, following the crisis of the Middle Ages when people found that God was not a the only reliable source of the universe, and the crisis of the Renaissance when the alchemistic analysis was challenged by the development of new science.⁶² Thomas's Chinese box strategy does not brings us face to face with the terrible crisis, because it distinguishes itself from the agnostic stance in the sense that it challenges the reader to a wiser awareness--the Freudian search may yield something useful, a reflexive reaction. This awareness calls for a mobility to move back and forth between the sign and the interpretations. Therefore,

Thomas's Chinese box strategy carries out a desperate affirmation rather than a pained scepticism. Actually, where the Freudian and post-Freudian search for a rational re-re-understanding of human beings fails, Thomas's art starts hopefully to open a new way of discovering human nature, without cannibalizing radically Freudian rational discourse.

Readers may notice that after Marya's re-telling of the summer house story--"her mother's confession" that makes Lisa "feel unwell"(234), the final narrative box starts to present, with a touch of "magic realism,"⁶³ a vision of a mysterious world, where mother and daughter even drink milk from each other's breasts:

Her mother asked her if she would like a drink, and when Lisa said yes she unbuttoned her dress and put her arm round her daughter to draw her to her breast. The first refreshing drops cooled Lisa's blood and her head stopped spinning. . . . When she had finished drinking and her mother had fastened her dress, she undid her blouse and let her mother suck. (235)

Afterwards both of mother and daughter feel "fresh and strong again" (235). Without a doubt, this incident evokes again numerous interpretations and re-interpretations, which attempt to "determine" this mysterious world in multiple ways. No doubt, this narrative can be seen as yet another Lisa's fantasy or a wished reunion with the beloved as she experiences the process of dying. But this sequence can also

be taken as an unrealistic description of the life of souls in Zion. If this is the case, then to the previous (re)visions--what Lisa sees, what Freud sees, what a biographer sees, and what a historian sees--the novel adds another new re-vision, which can be called what a holy eye sees. Since in the Western tradition God is "the Word" and the Word is God,⁶⁴ what the holy eye sees is actually a self-reflection, or a recursive reflection of words.

The last narrative box suggests that Thomas's art cannot be understood totally in rational terms. In more than one respect, the novel moves toward subversion of all rational ways of apprehension, because none of them is adequate for a full understanding of human beings. Although the purpose of science (including psychoanalysis) as well as of other human rational efforts (such as history) is to comprehend, they are highly specialized, if not peculiar, ways of comprehension, based on rigid and conventional methods of rational analysis.⁶⁵ All ways of comprehension, however scientific they might be, inevitably imply the adoption of a limited and limiting perspective. What The White Hotel shows is that there are other perspectives of knowing that we have ignored in our reading and interpreting process. As Geoffrey H. Hartman observes in a different context, "an unmediated

psychic event turns out to be a mediated text: words made of stronger words, of the Classics and the Bible, and suggesting even by their content the need of mediation"--"the incumbent mystery of text--as well as sense--and soul. . . . The relation of 'text' and 'soul' is the province of a theory of reading."⁶⁶ By structuring his novel as a Chinese box, Thomas aims at breaking narrow rationalism and its inevitable recursion, and establishing a comprehensive, paradoxical revision of "the relation of text and soul." So the Chinese box is not only a narrative strategy, but also a central image of soul in this poetic novel. The fact that Thomas is an accomplished poet as well as a novelist probably can help us understand why Thomas includes a long poem in his novel and relies on the power of imagery to convey his meaning. In an interview with Charles Champlin, Thomas acknowledged that he started by writing the fantastic poem and then "suddenly realized I had the core of a novel":

I write very much in an improvisational way. An idea comes and I write it only the way it presents itself, the way the images present themselves. It's very much like poetry presents itself. If I ever said I was going to set out to write a novel, I'm sure it would collapse like a house of cards.⁶⁷

To save his work from "collapsing," Thomas needs both a powerful, encompassing narrative strategy and a network of poetic imagery; and eventually he finds the two in one--the

Chinese box strategy which lays the basic foundation for The White Hotel. It reveals that Thomas's work is what Freud has called a symbolic "Chinese script" that not only unfolds in the spatial manner of successive contexts, but also creates a network of symbolic images. In The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud states that dream symbols "frequently have more than one or even several meanings, and, as with Chinese script, the correct interpretation can only be arrived at on each occasion from the context."⁶⁸ Responsive to Freud's idea of multiple meanings, The imagery of the Chinese box establishes the novel's distinctive identity and at the same time places it in a turning context of disseminating multiplicity.

Thomas's understanding of human nature and the soul can be explored in relation to our understanding of the Chinese box strategy. As I mentioned earlier, in The White Hotel the psychological and historical worlds are registered and inscribed as a multiplicity, and the novel itself becomes a Chinese box through its heterarchical orderings and arrangements of trans-related inner narrative boxes. Thomas constructs a group of heterogeneous narratives, at once overarching and kaleidoscopic, that shifts without warning from one perspective to another, from one level to another, from one place to another, from one reality to another, and

from one interpretation to another. This mixed or hybrid narrative form, which displays affinities with what Bakhtin calls the carnival discourse, achieves a further distinctiveness through Thomas's deployment of concepts from the spiritual realm, in addition to the fantastical, psychoanalytical, sociological, and historical discourses. Carnival discourse is multi-voiced discourse, and carnival interpretation is dialogic interpretation. The understanding of this situation makes it possible for us to grasp the validity of the partial logic of each interpretation. By juxtaposing different interpretations and perspectives, The White Hotel enlarges the space between the surface and depth of postmodern fiction, and, as a result, shakes the reader out of complacent habits of apprehension of text, personality, identity, and soul as a unity. The discursive pluralism in The White Hotel encourages the revitalization of what Bakhtin recommends "a special polyphonic artistic thinking." This mode of thinking will help us see human consciousness and the unconscious as a "dialogic sphere" which cannot be reduced from any "monologic positions."⁶⁹ Thomas's novel suggests that we are more than what psychologists, sociologists, historians and theologians can perceive, that any discipline or point of view that attempts to define our human nature is

bound to be reductionistic. If I say the structure of Thomas's novel is in some sense the structure of the psyche, I do not mean that his work mimics what the translators of The Standard Edition of Freud call "the mental apparatus," but the soul, which is more accurately the dynamic essence of the psyche, a mobile, illusive human nature.

The novel engages us, finally, because of its overarching re-vision of the soul. Thus, The White Hotel eventually moves from what Geoffrey Hartman calls "the incumbent mystery of text" to the compelling mystery of "soul"; "The relation of 'text' and 'soul' is the province of a theory of reading."⁷⁰ In Thomas's novel we must from time to time re-read and re-interpret the textualized psyche not as the subject defined by sociologists, or as the ego defined by Freud, but rather as the unspeakable "creative entity" that is related to the ineffable spirit that we call the soul, a human essence beyond our rational understanding. In a letter to Lisa, Freud admits that his psychoanalysis can never reach the soul: "The soul of man is a far country, which cannot be approached or explored" (174). Later in the novel, Thomas points out again:

The soul of man is a far country, which cannot be approached or explored. Most of the dead were poor or illiterate. But every single one of them had dreamed dreams, seen visions, and had amazing experiences, even the babes in arms (perhaps especially the babes in arms). Though most of them

had never lived outside the Podol slum, their lives and histories were as rich and complex as Lisa Erdman-Berenstein's. If a Sigmund Freud had been listening and taking notes from the time of Adam, he would still not fully have explored even a single group, even a single person. (220)

The soul seems to be the mysterious space that is unknowable either to ourselves or to others, and our most valorous efforts to understand it are at best only "explorations" or "approximations." But the ultimate unknowability of the soul is only the explicit message of this novel. Its implicit message is more hopeful: the novel's very Chinese box strategy demonstrates that we can know the human nature better if we observe it from multiple vantage points so that our (re)vision(s) will be stereoscopic rather than monocular, deep rather than flat. Using the Chinese box strategy, we can combine different approaches to illuminate what cannot be understood from a single point of view. Thomas's experiment with the Chinese box strategy suggests perhaps the possibility of exploring human nature by reconstructing one "white hotel" "on a fair harbour opening in the cliffs" (174). The "white hotel," in the end, should be understood as a symbol of Lisa's soul that transcends any vision/version or re-vision/re-version.

This understanding seems motivated by the novel's trans-relational tie with "the other side" of the empirical or

phenomenal world. Thus, "The Camp" transcends the realm of the empirically verifiable and the limitations of rational, cause/effect thinking box, and by extension, beyond death. It is probably this the-other-sidedness that touches our cultural nerve, removing the novel from the desperate recursion of our rational re-visionism to a holistic affirmation that does not negate any interpretations, but includes and assimilates them. The White Hotel represents Lisa's psychic journey into "the other side" of the language through a constant re-version, re-vision, and re-interpretation. Perhaps there are some inner boxes in our psyche deeper than or different from those reachable by conventional approaches. One can read the novel, with its profound revelation of Lisa's psychological complexity, as an analogy that just as boxes within boxes of re-visions suggest multilayered inner psyche, a surprising truth can be glimpsed only through the most elaborate and even conjectural strategy. What we have discovered in The White Hotel is a stirring illumination, something can be glimpsed only in such a rare art as Thomas's--this something may be called the soul, a truly Chinese box whose bottom can never be approached otherwise.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Chinese Box in Reflexion:

A Theoretical Review

Theory is not likely to teach us anything we did not already "know" about the nature of literature; but in helping us to conceptualize the nature of literature, it will vastly improve our understanding of what we know to be the case. In short, literary theory is not a matter of "my" theory versus "your" theory, but of understanding why, how, and to what extent all our practices "work."

Ross Chambers

Meaning and Meaningfulness¹

Postmodernism, intent on the production of radically sui generis expressions, puts a special demand on both the writer and the reader, a demand that eventuates in a new convention

of unconventionalism. Postmodernism has elevated unconventionalism to the point where it requires critical reconsideration. The best way to confront this result of unconventionalism is to isolate a certain strategy so conspicuously exhibited in postmodern novels, and to study its various performances in the light of an awareness that every variation of a narrative strategy derives from a unific convention that exists somewhere in the past. By illuminating the history, currency, and applications of a given narrative strategy and simultaneously exploring the divergent roles it plays in various texts, we can establish how individual uses of a strategy actually contribute to the formation of a new convention that is paradoxically connected to a long tradition. In the light of this study, we can see not only how an ancient narrative device--the Chinese box strategy--has been transformed and translated today, but also how these changes have contributed to the development of postmodern literature. Accordingly, in my discussion of the postmodern texts that employ the Chinese box strategy in various ways, I assume the constant revisitation of the "exhausted" and "replenishing" narrative strategy as a validating characteristic of postmodern literature. Implicit in this approach is a paradoxical view of the tradition as a prophecy

of future in the turn of the evolutionary wheel of literary fashion. If we bear in mind a convention may exhibit itself even in the most unconventional production, a careful analysis of the Chinese box strategy, whose variations have been discovered in diverse kinds of works, may outline some general features of an unconventional convention.

The Chinese box strategy is a convention as old as the story-telling art, and almost as universal. It is employed in every generic forms and across divergent historical periods and cultural realms. But its pervasiveness and recurrence also present a formidable challenge for discussion. One of the difficulties inherent in the current discussion of the Chinese box strategy has to do with typology, because the Chinese box strategy is employed in quite different narrative situations, and, as a result, it goes by different names in different critical contexts. In spite of various names, there seem to be several different kinds of narrative which one could legitimately term conventional Chinese box works, due to their strong "family resemblance." Traditionally, Chinese box narratives are broadly categorized according to their formal structures. The first category includes the stories within a story such as The Thousand and One Nights, Decameron, and the Canterbury Tales, in which several inner stories are linked

together by an outer story. Obviously, this multiple-storied narrative differs from another kind of Chinese box narrative--the single-storied frame narrative of Frankenstein and Wuthering Heights, in which the different narratives are presented not so much as separate tales, but as alternative perspectives of the same story.

Apparently, this typology bespeaks a certain subservience to the logic of rigid formal classification, but such is the fate of any order, or any ordering, which, although arbitrary, is necessary as a fulcrum by which to open a new, larger conceptual box to contain a broader discussion of the Chinese box strategy. The typology described above does not include "mode" or "method of discourse" in consideration and, as a result, leaves out another way of classifying Chinese box narratives according to their modes of discourse: the paradoxical and the non-paradoxical. The paradoxical Chinese box strategy appears frequently in unconventional postmodern fiction, reflecting the very paradoxical nature of its own discourse. If postmodernism has been witnessing the revival and flourishing of the Chinese box strategy, it has translated the strategy into an unconventional range of "disquieting puzzles and paradoxes." These puzzling features can be found in such diverse works as Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook,

John Barth's Lost in the Funhouse, and most recently D. M. Thomas's The White Hotel. All these works, refurbishing some "family resemblances" to their forebears, manifest a new kind of taxonomic characteristic and help rigidify a new "convention" of Chinese box strategy: the postmodern paradoxical that distinguishes itself from the traditional non-paradoxical. It is in the light of paradoxicalness that this study opens a new discussion of both the Chinese box strategy and postmodern discourse in general.

Nicholas Falletta in The Paradoxicon points out, "Regardless of their type, paradoxes tend to exhibit several characteristics. Chief among these is contradiction, but self-reference and vicious circularity are often present, too. Paradoxes generally possess a good measure of ambiguity, and their solutions frequently involve sorting out various meanings or interpretations embedded in the ordinary language or images that form them."² In postmodern fiction, we find ample illustrations of the Chinese box strategy linked to a powerful impulse that paradoxically both purifies the old features and underscores new varieties. In other words, Chinese box fiction in the postmodern era, unlike writing in the era that Roland Barthes posits for the "readable" text, usually employs its Chinese box strategy in a self-reflexive

mode; such use of the Chinese box strategy, by destabilizing the conventional concept of this strategy, makes the very application of this strategy a part of the message. Through this paradoxical reflexivity, postmodern Chinese box fiction develops and at the same time distances itself from its tradition.

Usually, critics use different terms in their discussions of the Chinese box strategy, which are concerned with only a portion of the total information necessary to understand the whole issue. These terms are sometimes contradictory to each other. Therefore, a re-definition of the Chinese box narrative is necessary, even if the primary function of such a re-definition is to create a target model, a conceptual box that we may accept, reject, or modify. By Chinese box narrative, I mean the work of interaction, which may be multi-levelled, multi-texted, multi-storied, multi-worlded; but one thing is certain: the interaction among all the trans-related textual boxes in the work generates the main concern of that work. Moreover, I have concentrated on those texts which exaggerate and accentuate what I call a paradoxical interaction, which requires the reader to perform successive acts of resignification and recontextualization of previously established meanings.

To venture into a discussion of the paradoxical Chinese box strategy, particularly in the context of postmodernism, means to agree to enter into a series of related critical issues such as reflexivity, metafiction, intertextuality, allusiveness, context, perspective, parody, point of view, and fictional space, which are inseparable from the analysis of the Chinese box narrative. The Chinese box strategy presents some important features of postmodern literature in general, which demand critical attention; perhaps both authors' willingness to employ the Chinese box strategy in their works and critics' fascination with the Chinese box of fiction demonstrate the importance of the Chinese box strategy in postmodern literature. In a century marked by continual revolution and innovation in all domains, such a narrative strategy that enables fiction on the one hand to "turn against itself" and on the other to generate new vitality must be both pliable and persistent. The facts that Chinese box strategies appear frequently in postmodern literature and that they have consistently been used as illustrative examples in recent critical theories also attest to the importance of this topic. The promise that the study of the Chinese box strategy will lead to a better understanding of postmodern literature in general can not be seriously doubted.

Critics are fascinated with "the Chinese box of fiction,"³ but the lack of consistent terminology to analyze the Chinese box strategy has, in turn, caused the critical discussion of this strategy to be correspondingly difficult. The fact that critics of different theoretical schools use different terms to analyze the Chinese box strategy in their discussions of novels, drama, poetry and other literary forms further complicates the issue. In the past several decades, prominent critics such as Tzvetan Todorov and Jurij Lotman all discussed the Chinese box narrative in their works. The pioneering research done on the Chinese box strategy by these critics was of seminal importance to the later, structuralist theories of Gérard Genette, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, and Teun A. van Dijk. In the field of reader-response criticism, Mary Ann Caws is well-known for her contribution to the discussion of how and why Chinese box construction occurs in the reading process. In the more recent critical climate, Jonathan Culler, Lucien Dallenbach, Mieke Bal and Douglas R. Hofstadter have each examined the function of the Chinese box strategy in narrative discourse. Jacques Derrida also explores Chinese box narratives in his discussion of the "ré-citation du récit." Viveca Furedy's interdisciplinary approach and Brian McHale's postmodernist criticism throw new light on the nature

of the Chinese box strategy. These discussions, in a significant way, encompass a wide range of critical trends and theoretical presuppositions.

Many theoretical discussions of the Chinese box strategy take Tzvetan Todorov as a convenient point of departure, probably because of the double feature of his theory: he considers literary "embedding" both as a property of linguistics and as a feature of literature. Although some critics believe that there are significant differences between Todorov's "story within the story" and other kinds of Chinese box narrative such as frame narrative, I believe that his discussion in The Poetics of Prose throws light on the inner mechanism in all Chinese box narratives of interaction.⁴ Todorov places the story within the story under the linguistic heading of "embedding" and relates it to the linguistic notion of "digression." He argues that "the formal structure of embedding coincides with that of syntactic form, a particular case of subordination, which in fact modern linguistics calls embedding."⁵ The example that Todorov discusses in "Narrative-Men" is a complex sentence. The original sentence is in German, which has two well-known translated versions--one by Richard Howard and the other by John Barth. In "Tales Within Tales Within Tales," Barth shows how Todorov

"illustrates the parallel with a wonderful sentence in German":

Derjenige, der den Mann, der den Pfahl, der auf der Brücke, der auf dem Weg, der nach Worms führt, liegt, steht, umgeworfen hat, anzeigt, bekommt eine Belohnung.

Richard Howard's translation of this sentence seems to me to miss Todorov's point:

Whoever identifies the one who upset the post which was placed on the bridge which is on the road which goes to Worms will get a reward.

A word-for-word translation reveals clearly the six degrees of "embedding":

Whoever the man who the post which on the bridge which on the road which to Worms goes, lies, stood, knocked over, identifies, gets a reward.⁶

While there is no point arguing which version is better, Todorov's point here is clear: each pronoun that introduces another subordinate clause in the embedding sentence is compared to each character in the stories within a story. Thus, Todorov's primary point is that the Chinese box narrative can be described by means of a linguistic model. As Barth observes, "his implication is that narrative structure in general is an echo of deep linguistic structure, and that frametaling reflects, even rises out of, the syntactical property of subordination."⁷

Todorov also describes the self-reflexive property of the Chinese box narrative within a story as follows:

For the embedding narrative is the narrative of a narrative. By telling the story of another

narrative, the first narrative achieves its fundamental theme and at the same time is reflected in this image of itself.⁸

Although he notices the Chinese box strategy's capacity to facilitate the reflexive structure of the story within a story as relating to the reflection of the "image of itself," Todorov fails to realize that it is the literary Chinese box strategy, and not the linguistic property of embedding, that enables this reflexivity to take place without violating textual coherence. However, Todorov concludes his discussion by suggesting that the extreme case of embedding is "the process of self-embedding, that is, when the story happens to be . . . embedded by itself. This 'laying bare of the device' is present in The Arabian Nights."⁹

If Todorov overemphasizes one kind of Chinese box narrative--the "embedding" or the story within a story, Jurij Lotman, in The Structure of the Artistic Text, discusses another kind of Chinese box narrative--the frame narrative with emphasis on textual boundary.¹⁰ Lotman states that "the problem of frame--the boundary separating the artistic text from the non-text--is one of fundamental importance."¹¹ Lotman conceives of art as "a finite model of an infinite universe":

a work of art is a finite model of an infinite universe. Because a work of art is in principle a

reflection of the infinite in the finite, of the whole within an episode, it cannot be constructed as the copy of an objection the forms inherent to it. It is the reflection of one reality in another, that is, it is always a translation.¹²

Speaking generally of the concept of boundary, Lotman conceives of the textual boundary as a static, spatial marker signifying an aesthetic realm. However, Lotman expands this traditional notion of the literary frame, asserting that the Chinese box strategy functions as a modelling system that takes place in the literary world of a given text.

Moreover, Lotman's discussion highlights the paradoxical nature of literary frame or boundary when he observes that a literary frame should be a "Janus-like" transition that contains both beginning and ending: "the frame of a literary work consists of two elements: the beginning and the end."¹³ However, because he does not take into consideration a dynamic account of the concept of boundary, Lotman gives only an one-dimensional analysis of the function of literary frame. Obviously, Lotman's one-dimensional boundary cannot be applied to the discussion of the complex and paradoxical postmodern Chinese box fiction. It is not surprising that most of Lotman's examples are mainly taken from Medieval literature. However, his explanation of how the frame facilitates the recognition of narrative oppositions is particularly

interesting: "This corresponds to the fact that the opposition 'existence vs. non-existence' was viewed in terms of the opposition 'created vs. not-created.'" ¹⁴ Lotman's account of the frame narrative is conducive to paradox, because he recognizes the frame's role as manipulating readers' response to a story:

If someone recounting a real historical event that took place in the past century tells us that the major figure involved is now dead, we do not take the information as sad tidings: we know beforehand that a man who was active a hundred years ago cannot be anything but dead. But we need only make the same event the object of a work of art, and the situation undergoes a fundamental change. If the hero triumphs at the end of the text, we feel that the story has a happy ending; if the narrative continues to the point where the hero dies our impression of the story likewise changes. ¹⁵

It seems that the frame may increase or decrease the distance between the story and the reader and, as a result, change the aesthetic reception of a text. Thus, Lotman suggests that these different responses "reveal the dual nature of an artistic model: while reflecting a separate event, it simultaneously reflects a whole picture of the world." ¹⁶ Thus, for Lotman, the Chinese box strategy is significant because it attests not only to the plot of the story, but also to "the construction of the world as a whole." ¹⁷ Lotman's formalist binary opposition paves the way for the later discussion of the Chinese box strategy in spatial terms.

Lotman also notes that the multiple frames and, as a result, multiple texts are common in literary works. Lotman conceptualizes the Chinese box work as a series of concentric narratives in which the aesthetic space is enclosed. Following his suggestion, we can distinguish between external borders, such as the one separates a fictional world and the real world, and internal one that intervenes between inner narratives. Lotman also points out "the possibility of spatial modeling of concepts which themselves are not spatial in nature."¹⁸ But Lotman's definition of narrative space or non-space, however complex it might be, is one-dimensional and limited by his narrow, rigid definition of a border; and as a result, his theory, in contrast to Gérard Genette's dynamic, flexible notion of multiple dimensional "metadiscourse," appears to be inadequate.

Genette's spatially oriented theory abstracts several different kinds of narrative levels: the "extradiegetic," the "intradiegetic" or "diegetic," and the "metadiegetic." The "extradiegetic" level is the literary act carried out at the first level -- that is, outside the narrative proper, while the diegetic level presents an act inside the narrative.¹⁹ The "metadiegetic" level is found inside another narrative. It is contained within the diegetic level and involves a

narrator who is already a character in the "intradiegetic" level. Another important contribution Genette makes to the discussion of the Chinese box strategy is his notion of narrative "metalepsis." "Metalepsis" is not a level but an "additional detour" to the narrative levels.²⁰ It means "taking hold of (telling) by changing level";²¹ or, in other words, it is an "intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe."²² It is a concept extended to all transgressions of the boundary that separates the fictional worlds:

All these games [of transgression], by the intensity of their effects, demonstrate the importance of the boundary they tax their ingenuity to overstep, in defiance of verisimilitude--a boundary that is precisely the narrating (or the performance) itself: a shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells, the world of which one tells. Whence the uneasiness Borges so well put his fingers on: "Such inversions suggest that if the characters in a story can be readers or spectators, then we, their readers or spectators, can be fictitious." The most troubling thing about metalepsis indeed lies in this unacceptable and insistent hypothesis, that the extradiegetic is perhaps always diegetic and that the narrator and his narratees--you and I--perhaps belong to some narrative.²³

"Metalepsis" is a useful concept because it breaks rigidly logical structuralism to contain the paradoxical "metadiscourse" that exists in postmodern Chinese box narratives.

The notion of "metadiscourse," since it was put forward by Genette, has caused a considerable amount of argument. Some critics assert that "Genette is wrong to use the term to mean the opposite of what it traditionally means." As Mieke Bal observes:

For if in the logico-linguistic tradition the prefix meta- indicates an activity having for its object an activity of the same class, the term metadiscourse should signify: discourse on the discourse, and metanarrative: a narrative on the narrative. The metadiscourse would then always have the function of commentary. It appears that Genette's inversion produces a more or less opposite meaning: discourse in the discourse, narrative in the narrative.²⁴

Actually, Genette broadens the meaning of the prefix meta- in several ways: for instance, from a commentary on linguistic activity, it comes to signify any commentary by the text on its own content, whether linguistic or not. Contrary to conventional use of the term, Genette's "metadiscourse" means both the discourse in which a discourse is embedded and the discourse on a discourse. In a sense, Genette's theory makes the term "metadiscourse" flexible enough to describe the whole performance of the embedded literary discourse, including a certain "counter-narrative" effect of the Chinese box strategy, which he calls "prolepsis."²⁵ In his discussion of "anachronies" in narratives Genette suggests that "prolepsis" is a form of reflexivity.

The double meaning of the prefix meta- in Genette's theory of "counter-narrative" indicates the flexible interaction between the narrative and the narration. The verb to "embed" in Genette's discussion is not a synonym of to "insert"--to embed one thing into another means to trans-relate it to other parts. Despite Genette's claim that the distance between narrative and narrating location "lies neither in time nor in space" but in a difference of relations, he necessarily employs both temporal and spatial criteria to distinguish narrative levels in a text.²⁶

Genette's highly abstract theory is developed by the so-called "post-Genettian" critics such as Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan. In addition to her emphasis on psychology, Rimmon-Kenan's post-Genettian theory makes an important observation: "The narrative level to which the narrator belongs, the extent of his participation in the story, the degree of perceptibility of his role, and finally his reliability are crucial factors in the readers' understanding of and attitude to the story."²⁷ Obviously, Rimmon-Kenan is more conscious of paradoxicalness than her predecessor. If Genette discovers a "metadiscourse" in Chinese box narratives, Rimmon-Kenan is interested in paradoxical discourses. In addition, Rimmon-Kenan's inclusion of "reader's understanding" in her

discussion is significant, for the process of embedding actually involves both the writer and the reader, which brings about an interaction between the narrative and the comprehension of the narrative. Rimmon-Kenan bases her concept of the interaction of the Chinese box strategy on Genette's claim that "language can only imitate language."²⁸ The Chinese box strategy provides a dialogic process -- a "mimetic illusion" in which the language alienates itself in order to imitate itself.

Another difference between Genette and post-Genettian structuralism is that of a progressive movement towards the question of the reader. This movement is brought on by the tension that results from alternating perspectives of different readers to a relative point of view in a spatially defined text. However, Rimmon-Kenan's discussion of "reader's understanding," which I have highlighted to show the interaction in a Chinese box narrative, is not fully developed, particularly in comparison with Mary Ann Caws's sophisticated reader-response criticism. Caws's well-known book Reading Frames in Modern Fiction provides us with the most comprehensive discussion of the Chinese box strategy from a reading perspective. Her discussion of modern and postmodern Chinese box fictions is crucial to the conceptualization of

paradoxical reflexivity. She distinguishes between the "pre-modernist texts" which "call attention to the substance and the field included or stressed" and the modernist texts which "emphasize the very idea of framing as it calls attention, above all to itself, and to the frames rather than to what they include."²⁹ Thus, Caws's study is intended to be a comprehensive analysis of narrative frames from the perspective of reading. Caws says:

the frame is valuable as a concept for the imagination, even in its strictest limits, as is the very act of "trotting around" it occasions, plainly self-inclusive and self-framing.³⁰

Caws categorizes the technique of framing into two general concepts, "outlining and insetting"--one deals with "the topics of bordering or silhouetting," and the other the issue of "embedding or boxing inward."³¹

Caws defines frames as "certain passages stand out in relief from the flow of the prose and create, in so standing, different expectations and different effects."³² These passages are perceived by the reader as different because of "alternations of pattern and architectural, verbal, or diegetic clues."³³ Hence, these passages are the most frequently remembered by the reader, and "each as a metonymy for the larger picture."³⁴ But Caws's definition of "framed passage," which depends on the reader's subjective sense of

distinguishing, also causes some confusions. It seems that the "frame," "levels" or "boundaries" are all subjective illusions, rather than objective factuality in the Chinese box narrative. These notions, however, might be helpful for us to understand the narrative boxes in some postmodern Chinese box fictions which do not have structural frames, since the frame exists only in a reading process.

In contrast to Caws's subjective reading theory, the objective study of narrative from a structuralist point of view has found expression in the work of Mieke Bal. Bal's Narratology is intended to present a systematic "textual description" and to formulate a reliable narratologics for such a description, which is also "accessible to others."³⁵ Her theory is based on objective difference in narrative acts rather than on the reader's subjective sense. She distinguishes between a fabula as a sequence of events that constitute the structure of the narrative text and a story "in which these events are presented" by actors or agents who are not necessarily human.³⁶ Her second observation is that the Chinese box narrative is not determined by the position of the reader, since the reader's perspective of the text is considered extraneous to the narrative process.

Bal explores the Chinese box narratives as variations of a presupposed narrative system.³⁷ This system is available because "it is in principle possible to give a complete description of a text, and because it is an account of all the narrative characteristics of the text in question."³⁸ To distinguish different "texts," "levels," or "variations," Bal takes the narrator or the character (rather than the reader) as marks for narrative levels. According to Bal, narrative is characterized by two types of spokesmen, "the narrator and the actor."³⁹ The narrator is understood as "a function and not a person" in the text.⁴⁰ Closely related to the narrator and at the level of the story is found a focalizing agent, which seems to exist between the linguistic text and the fabula. A Chinese box narrative usually contains more than one narrator or focalizer. Bal argues that the narratologist's geometrical configurations are valuable in understanding the Chinese box narrative, because they help the reader recognize the interaction between narrators and focalizers.

Although narratology is an ambitious theory that attempts to account for "all the narrative characteristics of the text," it actually leaves out many things that are important for the discussion of the Chinese box strategy. For example, the problem of coherence is crucial for us to understand the

notorious and chaotic multi-levelled and multi-texted Chinese box narrative, but Gerald Prince's A Dictionary of Narratology does not even contain a single entry on coherence.⁴¹ So to explain the coherence in a Chinese box narrative, we have to search for answers elsewhere. Teun A. van Dijk's studies provide a brief discussion of the problem of coherence in his analysis of both spoken and written discourses. As van Dijk observes, "The embedded recalled and imagined worlds must. . . be introduced coherently."⁴² Van Dijk's notion of coherence is one of interactional or oppositional coherence, which is achieved by linking different narratives from top to bottom or general to specific--a hierarchical ordering process. The implication of van Dijk's concept of hierarchical configuration is that in order to participate effectively in the discourse of the literary text, the reader must not merely collaborate with the writer, but must enter a dialogic domain with the writer. Because a shared context is only implicitly present, the specific levels of narratives are recognized only when the reader approximates a total re-construction of the multi-level systems accommodated within the literary text.

Obviously, to distinguish the levels in a hierarchy, we need a perspective. But postmodern Chinese box narratives refuse to provide such a unified perspective and as a result

blur the border lines in a literary text. In other words, in many paradoxical Chinese box narratives, the function of perspective is to run contrary to itself. This phenomenon is observed by some deconstructionists. To accommodate the complexity and paradoxicalness of modern and postmodern Chinese box narratives, deconstructionists introduce a number of new terms, concepts, and metaphors. For example, when talking about double perspectives in a Chinese box narrative, Jonathan Culler points out that a "mirror" may exist in the narrative space behind an object, which flashes towards the world, then is reflected back. The "movement" between the two perspectives may show "error of the other" in an irresolvable dichotomy.⁴³ Culler's mirror in the text, different from Dallenbach's concept of mise en abyme, does not admit the process of interaction such as mediation and assimilation. However, the "ironic" distance between two perspectives, as Christopher Norris has noted, "throws into sharp relief the paradoxes about cause-effect which deconstruction is resolved to uncover."⁴⁴ In other words, the border in a Chinese box narrative should not be regarded as objective or subjective factuality of a text, but as a function that mediates between narratives.

Jacques Derrida also regards the Chinese box strategy as a function, since he, like Culler, is not concerned with language itself but with the "movement of language." As Derrida argues, a proposed position in conceptual outer space looks back through the relations between different perspectives, highlights the movement of "spacing." Derrida is concerned not with space but with "spacing," which may be "unperceived" and "nonpresent." This position in the conceptual structures can conceive the unperceived through the linguistic sign defined as a difference between the signifier and the signified. Derrida bases his concept on the discrete signifier because "in language there are only differences." For Derrida, the difference in writing is a "hinge" or "brisure."⁴⁵ While he regards time as becoming space and space as becoming time, Derrida extends the concept of "hinge" to a special kind of interrelation, which does not separate spaces, but facilitates "spacing."

Derrida's dynamic notion of "spacing" has profound implications. It challenges both common sense and metaphorical sense in liberating and sublimating a formal "space," which may be "simultaneously imposed and effaced." Derrida states:

It is self-evidently not a question of a formalist aesthetic (it could, from another point of view, be demonstrated that the opposite is the case), but of formality as the space of aesthetics in general, of

a "formalism" which the history of art and aesthetics itself. And formality always implies the possibility of a system of framing which is simultaneously imposed and effaced.⁴⁶

It seems that there is a tendency on the part of the reader to bracket space and that the mode of presentation of a given text will dictate the possible kind(s) of bracketing devices that can be used in that particular mode of aesthetic discourse. A narrative, according to Derrida, might then be said of a construction that no longer inhabits the common empirical world, but a subjective world, a "judgment" that "is the mediated knowledge of an object."⁴⁷ A literary spacing is only an illusionary space, which is far away from the empirical world. Derrida, however, does not elaborate on the issue of audience/reader in the Chinese box narrative that is foregrounded in postmodern fictions. One of the consequences of the Chinese box strategy, which Derrida does not mention, is the loss of certainty on the part of the reader. Some paradoxical Chinese box works, through installing different, confusing tellers and listeners, constantly challenge the "system of framing which is simultaneously imposed and effaced."

Lucien Dallenbach in Mirror in the Text⁴⁸ systematically discusses a particular variation of the Chinese box strategy--mise en abyme; and as a result, this book has come to be

baptized as the "classic" study of this device. According to Dallenbach, the term "en abyme" was originally coined by André Gide to describe phenomena such as the play scene in Hamlet or the mirror in a Memling painting that reflects the room in which the scene of the painting is taking place. The difference between mise en abyme and other Chinese box narratives lies in the relationship between the contained and the containing; only in the case of the mise en abyme there is a common identity shared by the two texts. In his discussion of mise en abyme Derrida emphasizes the Chinese box aspect of all narrative of narrative, which mise en abyme serves as only one example. He calls the uses of mise en abyme "quotations of quotations with no original performance," emphasizing its potentially anti-narrative effects and its repetitive nature. Derrida says:

In this requotation of the story [ré-citation du récit], intensified or reinforced here by the requotation of the word "récit," it is impossible to say which one quotes the other, and above all which one forms the border of the other. . . . Each "story" (and each occurrence of the word "story," each "story" in the story) is part of the other, makes the other a part (of itself), each "story" is at once larger and smaller than itself, includes itself without including (or comprehending) itself, identifies itself with itself even as it remains utterly different from its homonym.⁴⁹

As Mieke Bal in Narratology points out, mise en abyme is a diagrammatical icon, an item constituted by "an analogy

between the elements of the sign and of the denotatum."⁵⁰ So the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm constitutes an outstanding feature for mise en abyme, though it does not necessarily characterize all Chinese box narratives. However, we should notice that once a situation is evoked where an object is reproduced on a smaller scale within a similar object, a "strange loop" may emerge. As Hofstadter observes, mise en abyme can evoke a "self-reinforcing 'resonance' between different levels" within a system, creating a 'strange loop' through 'the interaction between levels in which the top level reaches back down towards the bottom level and influences it, while at the same time being itself determined by the bottom level."⁵¹ This "interaction between levels" highlights many of the problematic qualities in contemporary thinking about the reflexive nature of postmodern fiction. Hence the study of the Chinese box strategy may illuminate the narrative mechanism in postmodern fiction and clarify some relationships between textual multiplicity and other phenomena of postmodernism.

There is no shortage of discussions of the Chinese box strategy in postmodern criticism. Two of the most well-known postmodern discussions of Chinese box narratives are Viveca Furedy's "A Structural Model of Phenomena with Embedding in

Literature and Other Arts,"⁵² and Brian McHale's "Chinese Box World."⁵³ Furedy attempts to treat "comprehensively" or theoretically the issue of embedding in literature as well as in art. McHale's discussion provides a general review of all "the Chinese box worlds" to be found in postmodern fiction. Furedy's study aspires to offer a comprehensive catalogue of characteristics which is supposed to enable one to recognize and identify any example of the Chinese box narrative. Borrowing several terms and concepts from various "incommensurable" disciplines, Furedy seems to attempt to summarize the "phenomena with embedding" once and for all:

As I hope to show, a radical decision to focus on the boundary between the embedding level and the embedded level enables one to demonstrate not only that (in their "pure" state) there are only three kinds of such phenomena, each of which has its own defining characteristics and effects, but also that they are actually three facets of the same underlying structure.⁵⁴

Furedy's account is characterized by a rigid "logical system," and is almost conducive to a metaphysical illusion in his search for the "underlying systematicity" of the Chinese box structure in almost all cultural fields including fiction, painting, drama, film and architecture. Probably Furedy's main contribution to the discussion of the Chinese box strategy is the concept of the "Ur-phenomenon" of embedding which is brought into being when a boundary creates

discontinuous hierarchical "logical levels" by means of an act of "punctuation." McHale's wide-ranging discussion is based on numerous exemplary works of postmodernism. McHale stresses the plurality of forms of the Chinese box strategy in the postmodern literary text, echoing Mikhail Bakhtin's accounts of heteroglossia, dialogism, polyphony, and carnivalization. McHale argues that postmodernist fiction is a carnivalization of styles, voices and registers which allegedly disrupts the decorous hierarchy of literary genres. But this kind of carnivalization is regulated by the Chinese box strategy.

In an age accustomed to all manner of fictitious "realities," it would not be surprising to find some Chinese box novels are self-referential or self-regressive. In Postmodernist Fiction, McHale proposes several literary implementations of self-regression, such as in Christine Brooke-Rose's Thru, where Larissa invents Armel, who in turn is the author of Larissa. The self-regressive procedure may be seen as an extension of the Chinese box strategy to bear witness to their own textual hierarchy, a reflexive device. Usually, self-regressive Chinese box fictions produce a sense of decentralization and leave us with a sense of perpetuating procedure conducted in the light of the text's writing and unwriting of itself. Through regressive embedding, such novels

generally present themselves as the products of a paradoxical process that is available in postmodern Chinese box fiction.

A recent discussion of the expression of the postmodern Chinese box strategy in hypertext fiction can be found in George P. Landow's Hypertext. Hypertext, as Landow explains, is not a system but a generic term, which refers to the writing done in the nonlinear or nonsequential space made possible by the computer.⁵⁵ Unlike static text, hypertext provides multiple, variable paths between inner texts. With its webs of linked inner texts and its networks of alternate paths, hypertext fiction presents a radically divergent textuality that is multi-sequential and interactive, favouring a plurality of discourses over definitive utterance and freeing the reader from domination by the author. Instead of facing a stable text, the hypertext reader sees only the image of a single "virtual" text on the computer screen. Behind that virtual image lies a nest of Chinese boxes of "possible" texts that can be represented on the screen in different ways, according to the reader's choice of paths to follow. Hypertext readily fulfils Barthes's description of the "ideal text" whose "networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest. . . . We gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be

authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable."⁵⁶ With its fluidity, contingency, indeterminacy, and plurality, hypertext provides a infinitely re-centrable textual heterarchy whose provisional point of focus depends upon the choices made by a truly active reader.

The postmodern Chinese box narrative, therefore, manifests itself in the multiplication of centres of power and in the dissolution of every kind of totalizing theory which claims to govern the whole complex field. But most of the theories discussed here reveal a tendency to organize differences into a unified pattern, to modulate heterarchy into hierarchy. Some critics and theoreticians attempt to examine the Chinese box strategy as an isolated device, rather than associate it with other literary and theoretic issues in their discussions, while others emphasize the formal structure of the Chinese box narrative, ignoring the interaction and the innate tension in it. Taken as discrete units, these critical discussions do not comprise a complete theory of the Chinese box strategy of any substance; they only mirror the current trend in literary theory over the past twenty or so years. The traditional approaches to fiction concentrate mainly on the linear organization of narrative texts, arguing that

fiction operates almost exclusively along a linear sequence. But the discussions of the Chinese box strategy indicate a new direction in which critics have been working to substitute the notion of heterarchy/configuration for the notion of hierarchy/linearity. Therefore, each approach to the study of the Chinese box strategy, to use Mario J. Valdes's words, "consciously or unconsciously maps out the terrain of its undertaking."⁵⁷ As its specific characteristics are discussed or misdiscussed in various studies, a co-optative and democratic, if not comprehensive, image of the Chinese box strategy certainly emerges.

CONCLUSION

The Paradox of the Chinese Box:

This Reflexive Miracle

If poetry is a paradox, then poetics is a metaparadox, and my writing about poetics is a metametaparadox. Someone who then tried to deconstruct my writing would be engaging in a metametametaparadox. It is not my intention to start such an infinite regress--but it is not within my power to prevent it either!

James J. Y. Liu

Language--Paradox--Poetics:
A Chinese Perspective¹

I began this study with the observation that a paradox inevitably appears in postmodern Chinese box fiction: on the one hand, given the increased organizational freedom postmodernity makes possible, the Chinese box strategy

contributes to the visibility of a novel's narrative configuration; on the other hand, it undermines the text's authority, breaking coherence with radical heterarchy and making fiction's discontinuity more challenging. This structural paradox is symptomatic of a textual tension or interaction in postmodern fictions, calling attention to the intrinsically reflexive mobilization of Chinese box narrative. To comprehend such narratives of interaction that self-consciously contest the totalizing authority of the principle of unity, we need to develop a "metaparadox" of narrative. To this end, I have examined various theories and poetics, which use disparate terminologies and focus on different aspects of the Chinese box strategy. However, I do not intend to offer a new kind of detached poetics of the Chinese box strategy in this study; rather, I have provided a "metaparadoxical" analyses of postmodern fictions that employ the Chinese box strategy in significant ways. In other words, I am not concerned with these theories and poetics themselves, but rather with their application to interpretation of particular works. I attempt to direct attention towards the organisational configurations, the paradoxical features, and the potential formative efficiencies of the Chinese box strategy. In this respect my study is not intended to

hypostatize a revolution of the Chinese box strategy in postmodern literature but to probe the presuppositions of typical practices for a full account of the Chinese box strategy in relation to other conventions and issues challenging postmodern fiction in general. Thus my study does not seek a complacent theoretical position to lie upon but rather works along laborious pathways of critical re-interpretation.

Although my metaparadoxical analysis is interpretative rather than theoretical in nature, after studying at some length a number of Chinese box fictions and examining various theories and poetics, I cannot help but have several observations. Based upon what we have found in the Chinese box narratives we have explored, I should be able to offer some useful hypotheses about the nature of the Chinese box strategy in postmodern fiction, and some speculations about the paradoxical dimension and reflexive implications of its applications in the era of postmodernism. We should be aware that the Chinese box strategy is based on a heuristic metaphor, which privileges the paradoxical over the logical. As we have seen, postmodern Chinese box fiction assumes its reflexive power of re-con-textualization and re-organisational appeal that is not inspired by a neat hierarchy of relations

among inner texts. Instead of the temporalization, fabula, plot, and sequentiality, the Chinese box strategy also proposes a spatialization of textual trans-relations that subordinates diachronic developments to the synchronic structuration of fiction. Although both temporal and spatial dimensions enter into the spacing of a heterarchical text, stratifications of text should be regarded as capable of interrelating in an unforeseeable number of ways, so that the productive recontextualization of text is always open, potentially infinite. The signification of a Chinese box narrative can be explicated by description of the configurations of inner textual boxes in terms of multilink system, co-optative trans-relation, paradoxical interaction, mise en abyme regression and interpretative recontextualization.

The Chinese box strategy, then, would be a normal situation for postmodern fiction because spatialization and contextual structuration are no longer confined to a small number of typical Chinese box narratives. Most postmodern narrative texts contain more than one narrative levels and textual boxes, or they have at least the potential for narrative proliferation and differentiation. The configurations of significant relations produced by the

interactions between inner texts, which dilate and expand the textual potential to maximal scope, has broad implication. Since a literary text is multiply encoded, it can enter into different contextual configurations and interactions, taking on a different set of meanings for each interrelationship. The Chinese box strategy, then, is very much a matter of comparing, associating and evaluating narratives, and reconstructing and transforming them to weave different stories with the same narrative elements which are recontextualizable and full of potential trans-relatable meanings. In other words, the Chinese box strategy does not mean to fix discourse into a hierarchy of levels of isolated units but to reconstruct the interaction between inseparable but disruptive texts. To use Richard Rorty's term, the Chinese box strategy is a recontextualizing "redescription," or simply a playing off of narratives against each other to construct and reconstruct the narratives in varied ways.² Therefore, the concept of the Chinese box strategy used in this study reconstructs the fundamental categories of literary experience by stressing the potentiality of productive interactions within narrative and text.

Postmodern Chinese box fictions, then, challenge us to recognize a new type of narrative, a textual heterarchy that

insists on the coexistence and interaction of different ways of using language and, hence, different ways of evaluating "reality." Postmodern Chinese box fiction is marked off from the earlier frame narrative and stories within a story by its syncretic inclusiveness and relativistic tension and trans-creative potential. Given the irreducible differences among inner texts, a Chinese box fiction can never communicate just one denotative, discoverable, and fully explicable meaning--be it thematic, psychological, or historical. The Chinese box fiction exhibits the quintessential mediation of parts and wholes in so far as it is always a heterarchy of circumtextual, intertextual, intratextual or extratextual tensions, and a co-optative configuration of mutually exclusive discursive con-texts. As a multilink system of various inner texts, textual heterarchy eventually subverts our own habit of thinking in terms of linearity and hierarchical trees, and challenges us to reflect on the nature of postmodern discourses. To orient oneself in a "Chinese box world" means for one to think of all its contents as being simultaneous and to determine their interrelationships at a single point of position. The very positionality produced by the Chinese box strategy destabilizes the theological

enterprise of formalizing the significations of texts and generates multiple interrelationships and contextualizations.

So, it is impossible to read postmodern Chinese box fiction either as a homogeneous representation of reality or as an expression of the author's personal opinions and psychology. Instead, Chinese box fiction exhibits a cross-fertilizing mediation of parts and wholes, a co-optative process of negotiating contradictions that does not always bring to the fore any satisfactory resolution. A monological approach can never account for the variety of narrative configurations invoked by textual heterarchy. Breaking away from the logical and logocentric tradition with its stable, one-sided view of reality, the Chinese box strategy admits paradox, a-logical logic, contradiction, multi-sequentiality, interaction, and trans-relation, which have far-reaching implications about literature in general. Paradox contains innate tension and interaction, since it is something that appears self-contradictory, a con-figuration that at some time, or from a particular point of view, appears to be what it is not. In other words, a paradox must by definition lead us to perceive a contradiction, an interplay, or a dialogue, and in so doing necessitates an acceptance that things may look like what they are not. Our ability to accept this

ambiguity is fundamental to our awareness and acceptance of the states of illusion, make-believe, pretending, and representation. By nature, literature is make-believe, illusion, pretending, and representation; it seems to represent something, but actually it does not. And thus it is essentially paradoxical. The recognition of the paradoxical quality of literature is one prerequisite for understanding the reflexive nature of representational acts that seem self-contradictory: the recognition of "reality" is possible only with this reflexive understanding of its "illusiveness" and its difference from what it represents. In keeping with this perspective, it will be useful to note that the paradox of literature derives from the paradox of language which, according to James J. Y. Liu, contains a contradiction between the assertion that language is inadequate for the expression of ultimate reality and the claim that language is the only ultimate reality that exists. If, as Roland Barthes insists, we are more in the possession of language than in possession of language, the paradox of language will lead us further to the question of the paradoxical relation between language and life--which is ultimately real? If the choices which appear to be free choices are determined a priori, any "reality" is

an "illusion," or vice versa. Thus conceived, life demands the same paradoxical treatment as fiction.³

In the relativistic climate of contemporary criticism, any serious interpretive project of literature is virtually obliged to interrogate closed systems of representation. The potential for paradox, therefore, remains fundamental to our understanding of literature, despite any claims we might make about an inferred, innate, or even empirically perceived truth. Paradox is, in our ontological experience, the primary way of expressing our reflexive consciousness, and the use of paradox is thus conducive both to make-believe and to illusionary states that are imputed to be the "real." In the perspective of the Chinese box paradox adopted in this study, my research has shown that narrative reflexivity may be critically examined in its relation to the play of signification in a figural process. In its unrestricted mobility, the reflexive narrative evokes an extra dimension--a dimension of historical ventriloquism--that ironically exposes the hidden fictive structures that is insufficient to the "real" and anticipates its own displacement by a more perspicuous re-vision. In other words, the practice of macro-reflexivity conforms to a paradigm of ironic discourse wherein an author arouses scepticism about the definitive "reality" of

any self-created box or conceptualization through critical reflexivity. Yet if the narrative's overt limitation expresses doubt about language's capacity to represent transparently the pre-established reality, the reflexive activity itself, through its layer upon layer of associations and dissociations, facilitates a movement from micro-reflexivity to macro-reflexivity in which the quest to present a meaningful truth is affirmed.

This observation is related in a paradigmatic way to narrative reflexivity in general and to the study of Chinese box narrative in particular. Although often regarded as a structural device, the Chinese box strategy functions beyond its formal liminality and encompasses man's efforts to know reality. Under its playfulness is man's painful efforts to re-comprehend his world or to re-judge his experience in it. The modern awareness of the arbitrary and illusory nature of verbal structures which purport to represent reality buttresses the postmodern notion of literature as a humanly designed construct which cannot reflect objective reality and is itself foregrounded as a new presence that exists betwixt and between reality and illusion. The belief in the autonomy of language urges writers to turn to the Chinese box strategy to ground their fiction in language as non-language. By

relentlessly unpacking its own fictive boxes, reflexive narrative calls the dogmas of representation into question, and consequently disturbs the cultural discourses and linguistic codes by which we translate our experience of the world. Paradoxically, since narrative reflexivity is itself an act of (re)signification which attempts to re-apprehend language as a signifying practice and as a production of meanings, it can be seen as paradigmatic of the postmodern endeavour to use language against itself in order to explore its limitations and possibilities. Therefore, narrative reflexivity is in effect a critical self-consciousness that allows us to perceive in our reading and writing of the world our unread and unwritten habits of thinking; and the ultimate challenge that narrative reflexivity poses to our modes of thinking is not limited to our analysis of literary texts but one that recontextualizes our interpretation of the world.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Brian McHale, Postmodernist Fiction (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), 114.
2. Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), x.
3. Patricia Waugh, Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction (London: Methuen, 1984), 28-34.
4. For discussion of hypertext, see Goerge P. Landow, Hypertext (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).
5. See Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 20; for similar discussions, see Christine Brooke-Rose, A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics (London: Methuen, 1983), and Mieke Bal, Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative, trans. Christine van Boheemen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).
6. Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse, 20.
7. See Robert Wilson, In Palamedes' Shadow: Explorations in Play, Game, and Narrative Theory (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990), 209-237, and "Narrative Allusiveness: the Interplay of Stories in Two Renaissance Writers, Spenser and Cervantes," English Studies in Canada 12 (1986): 138-162.
8. Robert Wilson, In Palamedes' Shadow, 212.

9. See Jonathan Hart, "A Comparative Pluralism: the Heterogeneity of Methods and the Case of Fictional Worlds." Canadian Review of Comparative Literature 15 (1988): 320-345.
10. Robert Wilson, In Palamedes' Shadow, 230.
11. Robert Wilson, In Palamedes' Shadow, 182.
12. See Steven G. Kellman, The Self-Begetting Novel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).
13. See Robert Alter, Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).
14. Brian McHale, Postmodernist Fiction, 120.
15. Charles Luk, Ch'an and Zen Teaching (London: Rider, 1962) Vol. 3, 92.
16. Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism, x.
17. Terence Cave, The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), xiv.
18. According to Ross Chambers, self-reflexive and "self-situating" narratives inhabit a particular moment "in a continuous historical evolution of the literary text." No longer serving the transmission of experience or information, these texts operate in an "artistic communication" situation. They "undergo the process of reification, becoming specialized as 'artistic' communication and more particularly autonomized as 'text,' . . . literature becomes interpretable and as such productive of meanings, rich in significance If literature no longer has use values (as direct communication) . . . its significance is a function of its interpretability as a complex sign for which other discursive signs can be substituted. However, in order to realize this potential value, the alienated text must first be read, and its seductiveness appears, then, as the necessary means whereby such a text succeeds in acquiring a readership . . . such seductiveness is the sign that, like other commodities that must find a place for themselves on the market of exchange, literature is aware of its alienated status and seeks to realize the potential for value that alienation confers on it" (Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of

Fiction, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, 11-13).

19. See T. S. Champlin, Reflexive Paradoxes (London: Routledge, 1988).

20. Patricia Waugh, Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction (London: Methuen, 1984), 148.

21. See Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism (New York and London: Routledge, 1988).

22. Robert Siegle, The Politics of Reflexivity: Narrative and the Constitutive Poetics of Culture (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 11-12.

23. See Mikhail Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays, ed. Michael Holquist and trans. Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), and Speech Genres and Other Late Essays, trans. Vern W. McGee and ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).

24. Robert Siegle, The Politics of Reflexivity, 11.

25. Mikhail Bakhtin, Speech Genres and Other Late Essays, 165.

26. Nora Stovel, "'A Feminine Ending?': Symbolism as Closure in the Novels of Margaret Drabble," English Studies in Canada 15 (1989): 86.

27. Nora Stovel, Margaret Drabble: Symbolic Moralist (Washington: Starmont Press, 1989), 13.

28. Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 2.

29. See Paul Ricoeur, "The Narrative Function," in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation, trans. John B. Thompson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

30. See Ross Chambers, Story and Situation, 4-12.
31. Federman, Raymond, Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1975), 8.
32. Mikhail Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, 378.
33. See Linda Hutcheon, Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox (New York: Methuen, 1984).
34. Fredric Jameson, The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 215.
35. Brian McHale, Postmodernist Fiction, 112.
36. Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism, 4.
37. Ross Chambers, Story and Situation, 12.
38. Ross Chambers, Story and Situation, 13.
39. Ross Chambers, Story and Situation, 9.
40. See Julia Kristeva, "The System and the Speaking Subject," in The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 25-33; and Revolution in Poetic Language, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).
41. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, trans. D. F. Bouchard and S. Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 155.
42. Mikhail Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, 291.
43. Joyce Cary, Art and the Reality: Ways of the Creative Process, (New York: Doubleday, 1958), 42.
44. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, ed. Derek Attridge (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 66.

45. Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, 270.
46. Charles Russell, "The Context of the Concept," in Romanticism, Modernism, Postmodernism, ed. Harry R. Garvin, (Lewisburg, Pa: Bucknell University Press; London: Associated University Press, 1980), 189.
47. Mikhail Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, 284.
48. Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (London: Methuen, 1981), 35.
49. Fredric Jameson, The Prison-House of Language, 184.
50. Fredric Jameson, The Prison-House of Language, 187.
51. Ross Chambers, Story and Situation, 212.
52. See Edward W. Said, The World, the Text, and the Critic (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983), 19.
53. Edward Bishop, "Toward the Far Side of Language: Virginia Woolf's The Voyage Out," Twentieth Century Literature 27 (1981): 359.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism, 55.
2. Doris Lessing, "Preface," in The Golden Notebook (London: Paladin, 1989), 8 and 13.
3. Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), 5.
4. Doris Lessing, A Small Personal Voice: Essays, Reviews, Interviews, ed. Paul Schlueter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), 79.

5. Doris Lessing, A Small Personal Voice, 33.
6. George P. Landow, Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 11.
7. Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984), Vol. I, 66.
8. Roland Barthes, S/Z, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill & Wang, 1974), 52.
9. Jeremy Brooks, "Doris Lessing's Chinese Box," Sunday Times, 15 (April 1962): 32.
10. Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 55; also see Patriocinio P. Schweichart. "Reading a Wordless Statement: The Structure of Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook," Modern Fiction Studies 31 (1985): 263-79.
11. Nora Foster Stovel, Introducing Margaret Laurence's The Fire-Dwellers (Toronto: ECW Press, 1991), 88.
12. Doris Lessing, "Preface," in The Golden Notebook, 13.
13. Larry McCaffery, The Metafictional Muse (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), 264.
14. Brian McHale, Postmodernist Fiction (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), 100.
15. Patriocinio P. Schweichart, "Reading a Wordless Statement," 274.
16. See Robert Alter, Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).
17. Max Ernst, "What Is Collage?", in Surrealists on Art, ed. Lucy R. Lippard (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 126.

18. F. L. Radford, and R. Wilson, "Some Phases of the Jungian Moon: Jung's Influence on Modern Literature," English Studies in Canada 8 (1982): 3-4.
19. Teresa de Lauretis, Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 159.
20. Florence Howe, "A Talk with Doris Lessing," The Nation, 204 (March 6, 1967): 312.
21. Joyce Cary, Art and the Reality: Ways of the Creative Process (New York: Doubleday, 1958), 42.
22. Derek Attridge, "Introduction," in Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, ed. Derek Attridge (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 2.
23. Charles Russell, ed. The Avant-Garde Today: An International Anthology, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 58.
24. Allen Thiher, Words in Reflection (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 114.
25. Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism, 8.
26. Allen Thiher, Words in Reflection, passim.
27. Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism, 40.
28. Roland Barth, S/Z, 13.
29. William H. Gass, The World Within the Word (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 100.
30. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, 173.
31. See Damian Grant, Realism (London: Methuen, 1970), on conscientious and conscious realism.
32. Graham Clarke, "Beyond Realism," in Black Fiction: New Studies in the Afro-American Novel Since 1945, ed. A. Robert Lee (London: Vision Press), 206.

33. Jean Ricardou, "Temps de la narration, temps de la fiction," trans. Joseph Kestner, in James Joyce Quarterly, 16 (Fall 1978/Winter 1979): 11.
34. See Robert Wilson, "The Space of the Untold: Conrad's Allusiveness," Victorian Review 16 (1990): 22-47.
35. Lucien Dallenbach, The Mirror in the Text, trans. Jeremy Whiteley with Emma Hughes, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 15-16.
36. Lucien Dallenbach, The Mirror in the Text, 16.
37. Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 280.
38. The term "self-contextualization" is borrowed from Ross Chambers, but is used in a narrow sense. For Chambers's discussion of "self-contextualization," see Meaning and Meaningfulness, 135-82.
39. R. Rawdon Wilson, In Palamedes's Shadow, 230.
40. Lucien Dallenbach, The Mirror in the Text, 191.
41. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, 216.
42. See Jorge Luis Borges, Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby, (New York: New Directions, 1962).
43. Patricia Waugh, Metafiction, 11.
44. See Mikhail M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), and Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1984).
45. Patrocínio P. Schweichart, "Reading a Wordless Statement," 264.
46. Derek Attridge, "Introduction," in Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, 15-16.
47. Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism, 3 and 13.

48. Robert Rubens, "Footnote to The Golden Notebook," The Queen (August 21, 1962): 32.
49. Doris Lessing, A Small Personal Voice, 19.
50. Roland Barthes, S/Z, trans. Richard Miller, (New York: Hill & Wang, 1974), 19.
51. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," New Left Review 146 (1984): 65.
52. Roberta Rubenstein, "The Fiction of Doris Lessing," in Essays on the Contemporary British Novel, ed. Hedwig Bock and Alberta Wertheim (Munich: Max Hueber Verlag, 1986), 108.
53. Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism, 125.
54. Lynn Sucknick, "Feeling and Reason in Doris Lessing's Fiction," Contemporary Literature, 14 (1973): 528.
55. William H. Gass, Habitations of the Word: Essays (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), 98.
56. Brian McHale, Postmodernist Fiction, 117.
57. John Carey, "Art and Reality in The Golden Notebook," in Doris Lessing: Critical Studies, eds. Annis Pratt and L. S. Dembo (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 24.
58. Roberta Rubenstein, "The Fiction of Doris Lessing," 109.
59. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, trans. D. F. Bouchard and S. Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 155.
60. Terry Eagleton, Against the Grain: Essays 1975-1985 (London: Verso, 1986), 116.
61. Charles Russell, "The Context of the Concept," in Romanticism, Modernism, Postmodernism, ed. Harry R. Garvin (Lewisburg, Pa: Bucknell University Press; London: Associated University Press, 1980), 189.
1. Loretta M. Lampkin, "An Interview with John Barth," Contemporary Literature 29 (1988): 488.

CHAPTER TWO

2. John Barth, "The Literature of Exhaustion," The Friday Book (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1984), 73-74.
3. See John Barth "The Literature of Replenishment," The Friday Book, 193-206, for his own explanation of kaputness.
4. John Barth, "Heroic Comedy," Newsweek 68 (8 August 1966): 82.
5. John Barth, Lost in the Funhouse (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), ix; subsequent references are to this edition and will appear in the text.
6. Beverly Gray Bienstock, "Lingering on the Autognostic Verge: John Barth's Lost in the Funhouse," Modern Fiction Studies 19 (Spring 1973): 69-78; Gerald Gillespie, "Barth's Lost in the Funhouse: Short Story Text in its Cyclic Context," Studies in Short Fiction 12 (1975): 223-30; Michael Hinden, "Lost in the Funhouse: Barth's Use of the Recent Past," Twentieth Century Literature 19 (1973): 107-18.
7. Heide Ziegler, John Barth (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), 50.
8. T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth," in Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 175.
9. Jay David Bolter, Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991), 7.
10. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, ed. Derek Attridge (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 115.
11. Jurij Lotman, The Structure of the Artistic Texts, trans. Ronald Vroon (Ann Arbor: Department of Slavic Language, University of Michigan, 1977), 283.

12. Jan Marta, "John Barth's Portrait of the Artist as a Fiction: Modernism through the Looking-glass," Canadian Review of Comparative Literature 9 (1982): 209.
13. Steven M. Bell, "Literature, Self-Consciousness, and Writing: The Example of Barth's Lost in the Funhouse," International Fiction Review
14. Heide Ziegler, John Barth (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), 51 and 52.
15. Edgar H. Knapp, "Found in the Barthhouse: Novelist as Savior," in Critical Essays on John Barth, ed. Joseph J. Waldmeir (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1980), 103.
16. Loretta M. Lampkin, "An Interview with John Barth," Contemporary Literature 29 (1988): 488.
17. Jay David Bolter, Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing, 11.
18. See Jac Tharpe, John Barth: the Comic Sublimity of Paradox (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1974).
19. See Tony Tanner, City of Words: American Fiction, 1950-1970 (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).
20. John Barth, The Friday Book, 72.
21. John Barth, The Friday Book, 191.
22. John Barth, The Friday Book, 218.
23. Michael Butor, "The Novel as Research," in The Novel Today, ed. Malcolm Bradbury (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977), 49.
24. John Barth, The Friday Book, 66.
25. See Robert Kierman, "Barth's Artist in the Fun House," Studies in Short Fiction 10 (1973): 373-74.
26. Ihab Hassan, The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 265.

27. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, 229.
28. David Morrell, John Barth: An Introduction (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 94.
29. See David Lodge, The Modes of Modern Writing (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), 73-111; and Roman Jakobson and M. Hall, Fundamentals of Language (The Hague: Mouton, 1956).
30. See Gerald Bruns, Modern Poetry and the Idea of Language (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); and Charles B. Harris, Passionate Virtuosity (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983).
31. John Barth, The Friday Book, 200.
32. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, 229.
33. Jan Marta "John Barth's Portrait of the Artist as a Fiction: Modernism through the Looking-glass," Canadian Review of Comparative Literature 9 (1982): 210.
34. Maurice Blanchot, Death Sentence, trans. Lydia Davis (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 1978), 37.
35. Michael Hinden, "Lost in the Funhouse: Barth's Use of the Recent Past," in Critical Essays on John Barth, ed. Joseph Waldmeir (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1980), 191.
36. Jac Tharpe, John Barth, the Comic Sublimity of Paradox (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1974), 114.
37. See Martin Price, Form of Life: Character and Moral Imagination in the Novel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).
38. Roland Barthes, Image-Music-Text, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 150.
39. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, ed. Derek Attridge, (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 352.
40. Roland Barthes, Image-Music-Text, 134.
41. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, 76.

42. Roland Barthes, Image-Music-Text, 135.
43. Robert Alter, Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1975), 20.
44. Douglas R. Hofstadter, Godel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid (New York: Vintage, 1980), 10 and 15.
45. John Barth, The Friday Book, 70.
46. Geoffrey Hartman, Beyond Formalism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 109.
47. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, 37
48. John Barth, The Friday Book, 22.
49. John Barth, The Friday Book, 22.
50. See Jacques Derrida, Dissemination, trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
51. Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, 1977), 56.
52. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, 44.
53. Jean Starobinski, The Living Eye, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 59.
54. See Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978), 278-93, particularly 292.
55. Cynthia Davis, "Heroes, Earth Mothers and Muses: Gender Identity in Barth's Fiction," Contemporary Review 24 (1980): 314.
56. Leo Bersani, A Future for Astyanax (Boston: Little Brown, 1976), 130.
57. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, 121.
58. John Barth, The Friday Book, 73.

59. Roland Barthes, Image-Music-Text, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 134.
60. Hugh J. Silverman, The Textual Sublime, ed. Hugh J. Silverman and Gary E. Aylesworth (New York: State University of New York Press, 1900), xi.
61. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, ed. Derek Attridge, (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 63.
62. Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism, 34.
63. See Charles B. Harris, Passionate Virtuosity (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 109.
64. Joe David Bellamy, The New Fiction: Interview with Innovative American Writers (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 4-5.
65. Evelyn Glaser-Wöhrer, "First Conversation with John Barth, Baltimore, Nov. 5, 1975," in An Analysis of John Barth's Weltanschauung: His View of Life and Literature, Salzburger Studien zur Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 5 (Salzburg: Univ. of Salzburg, 1977), 229.
66. Frank Gado ed. First Person: Conversations on Writers and Writing (Schenectady, NY: Union College Press, 1973), 141.
67. Alfred Appel, Jr., "The Art of Artifice," in Critical Essays on John Barth, ed. Joseph J. Waldmeir (Boston, Mass.: G. K. Hall & Co., 1980), 182.
68. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, 54.
69. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, 64.
70. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, 66.
71. D. T. Suzuki, Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 44.
72. D. T. Suzuki, Mysticism, 48.
73. Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 423.

74. See Kirsti Simonsuuri, Homer's Original Genius (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
75. Thomas Browne, quoted by Barth in "The Literature of Exhaustion," The Friday Book, 74.
76. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, 43.
77. See Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," in Structural Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, 1963).
78. See John Barth, Chimera (Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, 1972), 207-208.
79. M. Bakhtin, Speech Genres and Other Late Essays, ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, trans. V. W. McGee (Austin Texas: University of Texas Press, 1986), 36.
80. Joseph Frank attempts to replace Kantian concept of "time" with his concept of "space." He asserts that temporality in modern, spatially conceived literature has vanished: "the dimension of depth has vanished from history as it forms the content of these works; past and present are seen spatially, locked in a timeless unity which, while it may accentuate surface differences, eliminates any feeling of historical sequence by the very act of juxtaposition." See "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," Sewanee Review 13 (1945): 221-240, 433-456, 643-653.
81. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, 112.
82. Jorge Luis Borges, Ficciones, trans. Anthony Kerrigan (New York: Grove Press, 1962), 53 and 55.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Paul de Man, Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 299.
2. Time 117 (March 16, 1981): 88.

3. New York Times Book Review 86 (March 15, 1981): 1.
4. Observer (January 18, 1981): 31.
5. See Times Literary Supplement (March and April, 1982).
6. See Linda Hutcheon, "Subject in/of/to History and His Story," Diacritics 16 (Spring, 1986): 78-91.
7. See David Cowart, "Being and Seeming: The White Hotel," Novel 19 (Spring, 1986): 216-231.
8. Mary F. Robertson, "Hystery, Herstory, History: 'Imagining the Real' in Thomas's The White Hotel," Contemporary Literature 25 (1984): 452.
9. Robert R. Wilson, "National Frontiers and International Movements: Postmodernism in Canadian Literature," in Ambivalence: Studies in Canadian Literature, eds. Om P. Juneja and Chandra Mohan (New Delhi: Applied Publishers Limited, 1990), 51-52.
10. David Cowart, History and the Contemporary Novel (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), 159.
11. David Cowart, History and the Contemporary Novel, 159.
12. D. M. Thomas, The White Hotel (London: Victor Gollancz, 1981), 174; subsequent references are to this edition and will appear in the text.
13. C. B. Chabot, Freud on Schreber: Psychoanalytic Theory and the Critical Act (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 147.
14. See Isabel Hilton, "Author of White Hotel in Storm over 'Deception,'" The Sunday Times (28 March, 1982): 2E.
15. See Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," Sewanee Review 13 (1945): 221-240, 433-456, 643-653.
16. Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," 230 and 633. In his essay Frank talks mainly about poetry, but he extends his comments to the novel.

17. Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form of Modern Literature," 633.
18. See Walter Sutton, "The Literary Images and the Reader: A Consideration of the Theory of Spatial Form," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 16 (1957): 112-23.
19. F. L. Radford, "The Great Mother and the Boy: Jung, Davies, and Fifth Business," in Studies in Robertson Davies's Deptford Trilogy, eds. Robert G. Lawrence and Samuel L. Macey (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 1980), 67.
20. Gaston Bachelard, The Right to Dream, trans. J. A. Underwood (New York: Grossman, 1971), 172.
21. Michael Hollington, "Hysterionics: D. M. Thomas's The White Hotel," Meanjin 41 (1982): 364.
22. Mary F. Robertson, "Hystery, Herstory, History: 'Imagining the Real' in Thomas's The White Hotel," Contemporary Literature 25 (1984): 461.
23. Sigmund Freud, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works (London, Hogarth Press, 1953) 3: 191.
24. David Cowart, "Being and Seeming: The White Hotel," Novel 19 (1986): 217.
25. Terence Cave, Recognitions: A Study in Poetics (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 176.
26. Jacques Lacan, Ecrits: A Selection, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and London: Norton, 1977), 106.
27. Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978), 292.
28. Sigmund Freud, "Delusion and Dream in Jensen's Gradiva," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works 9: 8.
29. See Harold Bloom, A Map of Misreading (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 85.
30. See Jonathan Culler, On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

31. Sigmund Freud, "Psychical (or Mental) Treatment," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud 7: 283.
32. Jacques Lacan, Ecrits, 40.
33. Malcolm Bowie, Freud, Proust and Lacan: Theory as Fiction (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 155.
34. See Jacques Lacan, Ecrits: A Selection, trans. A. Sheridan (New York and London: Norton, 1977).
35. Jacques Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 20.
36. See Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harp & Row, 1962).
37. George Levine, "No Reservations," The New York Review of Books (28 May, 1981), 22.
38. Rowland Wymer, "Freud, Jung and the 'Myth' of Psychoanalysis in The White Hotel," Mosaic 22 (1989), 63.
39. R. D. Laing, The Divided Self (New York: Penguin, 1965), 180-181.
40. For discussion of the notion of the patient as a "text," see B. Chabot, Freud on Schreber: Psychoanalytic Theory and the Critical Act (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982).
41. Edward Said, Beginnings (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 139.
42. See Salman Rushdie, Midnight's Children (London: Picardor, 1982).
43. See Thomas Pynchon, V (New York: Bantam, 1963).
44. D.M. Thomas, "Letter to the Editor," Times Literary Supplement (2 April 1982): 383.

45. D. M. Thomas, Mademoiselle February, 1983: 160.
46. David Cowart, "Being and Seeming: The White Hotel," 226.
47. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, trans. D.F. Bouchard and S. Simon. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977), 155.
48. Tony Bennett, "Text and History," in Re-Reading English, ed. Peter Widdowson (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), 235.
49. Thomas's view of human personality is similar to Jacques Lacan's. For Lacan's view, see Jane Gallop, Reading Lacan (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), 83, and Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 242.
50. George P. Landow, Hypertext (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 56.
51. Walter Sullivan, "Terrors Old and New: Bellow's Rumania and Three Views of the Holocaust," Sewanee Review 37 (1982): 400.
52. Lars Ole Sauerberg, "When the Soul Takes Wing: D. M. Thomas's The White Hotel," Critique 31 (Fall 1989): 6.
53. Lars Ole Sauerberg, "When the Soul Takes Wing," 4.
54. Brian McHale, Postmodernist Fiction (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), 114.
55. Michel Riffaterre, Semiotics of Poetry (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 165.
56. Gilles Deleuze, Dialogues, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 69.
57. See Donald P. Spencer, Narrative Truth and Historical Truth: Meaning and Interpretation in Psychoanalysis (New York: Norton, 1982), 188.

58. See Jacques Derrida, Dissemination, trans. by B. Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

59. Jacques Derrida, Acts of Literature, 76.

60. Peter Brooks, Reading for the Plot (New York: Knopf, 1984), 351.

61. See Françoise Meltzer, "Editor's Introduction: Partitive Plays, Pipe Dreams," Critical Inquiry 13 (Winter 1987): 215-221. Meltzer says:

There is the famous anecdote about Freud: upon being reminded by a disciple that to smoke cigar is clearly a phallic activity, Freud, cigar in hand, is said to have responded, "Sometimes a good cigar is just a good cigar." The anecdote demonstrates, it seems to me, a problematic central to psychoanalysis: the discipline which insists on transference and, perhaps even more significantly, on displacement as fundamental principles, ultimately must insist in turn on seeing everything as being "really" something else. Such an ideology of metamorphosis is so much taken for granted that unlike the rest of the world, which generally has difficulty in being convinced that a pipe, for example, is not necessarily a pipe at all, psychoanalysis needs at times to remind itself, in a type of return to an adaequatio, that it is possible for a cigar really to be a cigar. Psychoanalysis, in other words, has not only an economy which is hydraulic (mirroring the nineteenth-century physics from which it springs), but has as well an economy of seepage: each apparent object, whether in dream, literature, or psychic narrative, splashes over onto at least one "something else." Not only is there always a remainder, but the remainder generally proliferates, multiplies, from more than one quotient, such that the original "thing" in question becomes merely the agent for production. Its status as thing-in-the-world is easily lost. (215-16)

62. See Brian Vickers, Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

63. For discussion of magic realism in The White Hotel, see John Burt Foster, Jr. "Magic Realism in The White Hotel: Compensatory Vision and the Transformation of Classic Realism," Southern Humanities Review 20 (1986): 205-219.

64. See the Bible, John 1:1.

65. See A. N. Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1953), especially Chapter 1.

66. Geoffrey H. Hartman, "Words, Wish, Worth: Wordsworth," in Deconstruction and Criticism, ed. Harold Bloom, et al (New York: Seabury, 1979), 186.

67. Charles Champlin, "'Woe and Betide' the Serious Writer Turned Celebrity," Book Review Section, Los Angeles Times 14 (February, 1982), 3.

68. Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. (London: Hogarth, 1968), 5: 353.

69. See Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1968); The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays, ed. Michael Holquist and trans. Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); and Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

70. Geoffrey H. Hartman, "Words, Wish, Worth: Wordsworth," 186.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Ross Chambers, Meaning and Meaningfulness: Studies in the Analysis and Interpretation of Texts (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1979), 21.

2. Nicholas Falletta, The Paradoxicon (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), xix.

3. Brian McHale, Postmodernist Fiction (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), 114.
4. Tzvetan Todorov, The Poetics of Prose, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 70-79.
5. Tzvetan Todorov, The Poetics of Prose, 70.
6. John Barth, The Friday Book, 235.
7. John Barth, The Friday Book, 236.
8. Tzvetan Todorov, The Poetics of Prose, 72.
9. Tzvetan Todorov, The Poetics of Prose, 72.
10. See Jurij Lotman, The Structure of the Artistic Text, trans. Ronald Vroon (Ann Arbor: Department of Slavic Language, University of Michigan, 1977).
11. Jurij Lotman, The Structure of the Artistic Text, 209.
12. Jurij Lotman, The Structure of the Artistic Text, 210.
13. Jurij Lotman, The Structure of the Artistic Text, 212.
14. Jurij Lotman, The Structure of the Artistic Text, 212.
15. Jurij Lotman, The Structure of the Artistic Text, 216.
16. Jurij Lotman, The Structure of the Artistic Text, 216.
17. Jurij Lotman, The Structure of the Artistic Text, 216.
18. Jurij Lotman, The Structure of the Artistic Text, 218.
19. Gérard Genette, Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 228.
20. Gérard Genette, Narrative Discourse, 237.
21. Gérard Genette, Narrative Discourse, 235.
22. Gérard Genette, Narrative Discourse, 234.

23. Gérard Genette, Narrative Discourse, 235-36.
24. Mieke Bal, "Notes on Narrative Embedding," Poetics Today 2 (1981): 41.
25. Gérard Genette, Narrative Discourse, 67.
26. Gérard Genette, Narrative Discourse, 227.
27. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics (London: Methuen, 1983), 94.
28. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction, 108.
29. Mary Ann Caws, Reading Frames in Modern Fiction (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), xi.
30. Mary Ann Caws, Reading Frames in Modern Fiction, 4.
31. Mary Ann Caws, Reading Frames in Modern Fiction, 21-22.
32. Mary Ann Caws, Reading Frames in Modern Fiction, xi.
33. Mary Ann Caws, Reading Frames in Modern Fiction, xi.
34. Mary Ann Caws, Reading Frames in Modern Fiction, xi.
35. Mieke Bal, Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative, trans. Christine van Boheemen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 4.
36. Mieke Bal, Narratology, 5.
37. Mieke Bal, Narratology, 3.
38. Mieke Bal, Narratology, 9.
39. Mieke Bal, Narratology, 8.
40. Mieke Bal, Narratology, 119.
41. Gerald Prince, A Dictionary of Narratology (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

42. Teun A. van Dijk, Text and Context: Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse (London and New York: Longman, 1977), 101.
43. Jonathan Culler, On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 164-65.
44. Christopher Norris, Deconstruction and the Interest of Theory (London: Pinter, 1988), 133.
45. See Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), and Dissemination, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
46. Jacques Derrida, "The Parergon," trans. Craig Owens, October 9 (1979): 28-29.
47. Jacques Derrida, "The Parergon," 29.
48. See Lucien Dallenbach, The Mirror in the Text, trans. Jeremy Whiteley with Emma Hughes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).
49. See Jacques Derrida, "Living on: Border Lines," in Deconstruction and Criticism eds. H. Bloom et al (New York: Continuum, 1979), 99-100.
50. Mieke Bal, Narratology, 199.
51. Douglas R. Hofstadter, Godel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 709.
52. Viveca Furedy, "A Structural Model of Phenomena with Embedding in Literature and Other Arts," Poetics Today 10 (1989): 745-767.
53. Brian McHale, "Chinese Box World," in Postmodernist Fiction (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), 112-30.
54. Viveca Furedy, "A Structural Model," 746.
55. See George P. Landow, Hypertext (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

56. Roland Barthes, S/Z, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 6.

57. Mario J. Valdes, Phenomenological Hermeneutics and the Study of Literature (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 39.

CONCLUSION

1. James J. Y. Liu, Language--Paradox--Poetics: A Chinese Perspective (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 38.

2. Richard Rorty, Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 79.

3. See James J. Y. Liu, Language--Paradox--Poetics.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alter, Robert. Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

Apple, Alfred, Jr. "The Art of Artifice." In Critical Essays on John Barth. Edited by Joseph J. Waldmeir. Boston: G. K. Hall. 1980.

Bachelard, Gaston. The Right to Dream. Translated by J. A. Underwood. New York: Grossman, 1971.

Bal, Mieke. Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative. Translated by Christine van Boheemen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985.

----- "Notes on Narrative Embedding." Poetics Today 2 (1981): 41-56.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. Rabelais and His World. Translated by Hélène Iswolsky. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1968.

----- The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays. Edited by Michael Holquist and translated by Caryl Emerson. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

----- Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics. Translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

----- Speech Genre and Other late Essays. Translated by Vern W. McGee and edited by C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).

Barnsley, John H. "The White Hotel." The Antioch Review 40 (1982): 448-60.

Bartkowski, Frances, and Catherine Stearns. "The Lost Icon in The White Hotel." Journal of the History of Sexuality 1 (1990): 283-95.

Barth, John. Lost in the Funhouse. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968.

----- The Friday Book. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1984.

----- "Heroic Comedy." Newsweek 68 (8 August 1966): 82-83.

----- Chimera. Greenwich: Fawcett Publications: 1972.

Barthes, Roland. S/Z. Translated by Richard Miller. New York: Hill & Wang, 1974.

----- The Pleasure of the Text. Translated by Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1975.

----- Image-Music-Text. Edited and translated by Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.

----- Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Farrar, 1977.

Bellamy, David Joe. The New Fiction: Interview with Innovative American Writers. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974.

Bersani, Leo. A Future for Aesthetics: Character and Desire in Literature. Boston: Little Brown, 1976.

Bettelheim, Bruno. "Freud and the Soul." The New Yorker (March 1, 1982): 52-93.

Bienstock, Beverly Gray. "Lingering on the Autognostic Verge: John Barth's Lost in the Funhouse." Modern Fiction Studies 19 (1973): 69-78.

Bishop, Edward L. "Toward the Far Side of Language: Virginia Woolf's The Voyage Out." Twentieth Century Literature 27 (1981): 343-361.

----- "Writing, Speech, and Silence in Mrs. Dalloway." English Studies in Canada 12 (1986): 397-423.

Blanchot, Maurice. Death Sentence. Translated by Lydia Davis. Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 1978.

----- The Gaze of Orpheus. Translated by Lydia Davis. Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1981.

Bloom, Harold. The Anxiety of Influence. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

----- A Map of Misreading. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Bolter, Jay David. Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991.

Booth, Wayne. The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Borges, Jorge Luis. Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings. Edited by Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby. New York: New Directions, 1962.

----- Ficciones. Translated by Anthony Kerrigan. New York: Grove Press, 1962.

----- Other Inquisitions: 1937-1952. Translated by Ruth L. C. Simme. Austin, 1964.

----- The Aleph and Other Stories: 1933-1969. Edited and translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni. New York: Dutton, 1978.

Boyd, Michael. The Reflexive Novel: Fiction as Critique. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1983.

Bradbury, Malcolm, ed. The Novel Today. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977.

Brooke-Rose, Christine. A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Brooks, Peter. Reading for the Plot. New York: Knopf, 1984.

Brooks, Jeremy. "Doris Lessing's Chinese Box." Sunday Times 15 (April 1962): 32.

- Brooks, Peter. Reading for the Plot. New York: Knopf, 1984.
- Bruns, Gerald. Modern Poetry and the Idea of Language. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.
- Butor, Michael. "The Novel as Research." In The Novel Today. Edited by Malcolm Bradbury. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977.
- Calinescu, Matei, and Douwe Fokkema, eds. Exploring Postmodernism. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1987.
- Carroll, David. The Subject in Question: The Language of Theory and the Strategies of Fiction. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Carey, John. "Art and Reality in The Golden Notebook." In Doris Lessing: Critical Studies. Edited by Annis Pratt and L. S. Dembo. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974.
- Cary, Joyce. Art and the Reality: Ways of the Creative Process. New York: Doubleday, 1958.
- Cave, Terence. The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.
- Recognitions: A Study in Poetics. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- Caws, Mary Ann. Reading Frames in Modern Fiction. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- Chabot, C. B. Freud on Schreber: Psychoanalytic Theory and the Critical Act. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982.
- Chamberlain, Daniel Frank. Narrative Perspective in Fiction. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990.
- Chambers, Ross. Meaning and Meaningfulness: Studies in the Analysis and Interpretation of Texts. Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1979.
- Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

----- Room for Maneuver: Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Champlin, T. S. Reflexive Paradoxes. London: Routledge, 1988.

Chatman, Seymour. Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.

Ch'ien, Edward T. "The Conception of Language and the Use of Paradox in Buddhism and Taoism." Journal of Chinese Philosophy 11 (1984): 375-399.

Clarke, Graham. "Beyond Realism." In Black Fiction: New Studies in the Afro-American Novel Since 1945. Edited by A. Robert Lee. London: Vision Press, 1982.

Cowart, David. History and the Contemporary Novel. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989.

----- "Being and Seeming: The White Hotel." Novel 19 (1986): 216-231.

Culler, Jonathan. On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982.

Dallenbach, Lucien. The Mirror in the Text. Translated by Jeremy Whiteley with Emma Hughes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Davis, Cynthia. "Heroes, Earth Mothers and Muses: Gender Identity in Barth's Fiction." Contemporary Review 24 (1980): 310-321.

Davis, Lennard. Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.

de Lauretis, Teresa. Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema. Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1984.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. New York: Viking, 1977.

----- and Claire Parnet. Dialogues. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.

De Man, Paul. Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

Derrida, Jacques. Of Grammatology. Translated by Gayatri Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

----- Writing and Differences. Translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978.

----- "Living On: Border Lines." Translated by James Hulbert. In Deconstruction and Criticism. Edited by Harold Bloom, et al. New York: Seabury, 1979.

----- "The Parergon." Translated by Graig Owens. October 9 (1979): 3-40.

----- Dissemination. Translated by Barbara Johnson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

----- Positions. Translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

----- Acts of Literature. Edited by Derek Attridge. New York and London: Routledge, 1992.

Dittmar, Linda. "Fashioning and Re-fashioning: Framing Narratives in the Novel and Film." Mosaic 16 (1983): 189-203.

Docherty, Thomas. Reading (Absent) Character: Towards a Theory of Characterization in Fiction. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.

Doležel, Lubomír. "Towards a Typology of Fictional Worlds." Tamkang Review 14 (1984-85): 262-274.

----- "Mimesis and Possible Worlds." Poetics Today 9 (1988): 475-496.

Eagleton, Terry. Against the Grain: Essays 1975-1985. London: Verso, 1986.

Eco, Umberto. Travels in Hyperreality: Essays. Translated by William Weaver. London: Picador-Pan Books, 1987.

Eliade, Mircea. Myth and Reality. New York: Harper, 1968.

Eliot, T. S. Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot. Edited by Frank Kermode. London: Faber and Faber, 1975.

Ernst, Max. "What Is Collage?" In Surrealists on Art. Edited by Lucy R. Lippard. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970.

Falletta, Nicholas. The Paradoxicon. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983.

Federman, Raymond, ed. Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow. Chicago: Swallow Press, 1975.

Felperin, Howard. Beyond Deconstruction: The Uses and Abuses of Literary Theory. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.

Fish, Stanley. Is There a Text in This Class? Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Fleishman, Avrom. "The Landscape of Hysteria in The Secret Agent." In Conrad Revisited: Essays for the Eighties. Edited by Ross C. Murfin. University: University of Alabama Press, 1985.

Fokkema, Douwe W., and Hans Bertens, eds. Approaching Postmodernism. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1986.

Foster, John Burt, Jr. "Magic Realism in The White Hotel: Compensatory Vision and the Transformation of Classic Realism." Southern Humanities Review 20 (1986): 205-219.

Foucault, Michel. The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences. New York: Pantheon Books, 1970.

----- Language, Counter-Memory, Practice. Translated by D.F. Bouchard and S. Simon. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.

Frank, Joseph. "Spatial Form in Modern Literature." Sewanee Review 13 (1945): 221-240, 433-456, 643-653.

Freud, Sigmund. "Delusion and Dream in Jensen's Gradiwa." The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works 9. London: Hogarth Press, 1968.

----- The Interpretation of Dreams. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works 5. London: Hogarth, 1968.

Frow, John. "The Literary Frame." Journal of Aesthetic Education 16 (1981): 24-30.

Frye, Northrop. Fearful Symmetry. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958.

Furedy, Viveca. "A Structural Model of Phenomena with Embedding in Literature and Other Arts." Poetics Today 10 (1989): 745-767.

Gallop, Jane. Reading Lacan. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Gado, Frank, ed. First Person: Conversations on Writers and Writing. Schenectady, NY: Union College Press, 1973.

Gallop, Jane. Reading Lacan. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Gass, William H. Fiction and Figures of Life. New York: Knopf, 1970.

----- The World Within the Word. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978.

----- Habitations of the Word: Essays. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985.

Genette, Gérard. Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method. Translated by Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.

Ghent, Dorothy Van. The English Novel: Form and Function. New York: Rinehart, 1953.

Gillespie, Gerald. "Barth's Lost in the Funhouse: Short Story Text in its Cyclic Context." Studies in Short Fiction 12 (1975): 223-30.

Glaser-Wöhler, Evelyn. "First Conversation with John Barth, Baltimore, Nov. 5, 1975." In An Analysis of John Barth's Weltanschauung: His View of Life and Literature. Salzburger Studien Zur Anglistik und Amerikanistik 5. Salzburg: Univ. of Salzburg, 1977.

Grant, Damian. Realism. London: Methuen, 1970.

Gregory, Richard L. and E. H. Gombrich, eds. Illusion in Nature and Art. New York: Scribner, 1973.

Harris, Charles B. Passionate Virtuosity. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983.

Hart, Jonathan. "A Comparative Pluralism: the Heterogeneity of Methods and the Case of Fictional Worlds." Canadian Review of Comparative Literature 15 (1988): 320-345.

----- Theatre and World. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992.

Hartman, Geoffrey. Beyond Formalism. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970.

----- "Words, Wish, Worth: Wordsworth." In Deconstruction and Criticism. Edited by Harold Bloom, et al. New York: Seabury, 1979.

Hassan, Ihab. "Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective." Critical Inquiry 12 (1986): 503-20.

----- The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987.

----- The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982.

Hilton, Isabel. "Author of White Hotel in Storm over 'Deception.'" The Sunday Times 28 March, 1982: 2E.

Hinden, Michael. "Lost in the Funhouse: Barth's Use of the Recent Past." In Critical Essays on John Barth. Edited by Joseph Waldmeir. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980.

Hofstadter, Douglas R. Godel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid. New York: Basic Books, 1979.

----- Metamagical Themas. New York: Basic Books, 1985.

Hollington, Michael. "Hysterionics: D. M. Thomas's The White Hotel." Meanjin 41 (1982): 363-69.

Holquist, Michael. "The Carnival of Discourses: Baxtin and Simultaneity." Canadian Review of Comparative Literature 12 (1985): 220-234.

Holt, R. R. "Freud's Impact upon Modern Morality and our World View." In Darwin, Marx, and Freud. Edited by A. L. Caplan and B. Jennings. New York: Plenum, 1982.

Hutcheon, Linda. Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980.

----- A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms. New York and London: Methuen, 1985.

----- A Poetics of Postmodernism. New York and London: Routledge, 1988.

----- "Subject in/of/to History and His Story." Diacritics 16 (1986): 78-91.

Iser, Wolfgang. The Implied Reader. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974.

Jakobson, Roman, and M. Hall. Fundamentals of Language. The Hague: Mouton, 1956.

Jameson, Fredric. The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972.

----- The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act. London: Methuen, 1981.

----- "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." New Left Review 146 (1984): 53-92.

Joseph, Gerhard. John Barth. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1970.

Kambourelli, Smaro. On the Edge of Genre. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.

Kawin, Bruce F. The Mind of the Novel: Reflexive Fiction and the Ineffable. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Kellnan, Steven G. The Self-Begetting Novel. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

Kierman, Robert. "Barth's Artist in the Fun House." Studies in Short Fiction 10 (1973): 373-74.

Kinder, Marsha. "The Spirit of the White Hotel." Humanities in Society 4 (1981): 143-70.

Klinkowitz, Jerome. Literary Disruptions: the Making of a Post-Contemporary American Fiction. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975.

Knapp, Edgar H. "Found in the Barthhouse: Novelist as Savior." In Critical Essays on John Barth. Edited by Joseph J. Waldmeir. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980.

Koelb, Clayton. Inventions of Reading: Rhetoric and the Literary Imagination. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Lacan, Jacques. Ecrits: A Selection. Translated by A. Sheridan. New York and London: Norton, 1977.

----- The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis. Translated by Alan Sheridan. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979.

Lampkin, Loretta M. "An Interview with John Barth." Contemporary Literature 29 (1988): 485-97.

Laing, R. D. The Divided Self. New York: Penguin, 1965.

Landow, George P. Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.

Lessing, Doris. A Small Personal Voice: Essays, Reviews, Interviews. Edited by Paul Schlueter. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975.

----- The Golden Notebook. London: Paladin, 1989.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. "The Structural Study of Myth." In Structural Anthropology. New York: Basic Books, 1963.

Lippard, Lucy R. ed. Surrealists on Art. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970.

Liu, James J. Y. Language--Paradox--Poetics: A Chinese Perspective. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Lodge, David. The Modes of Modern Writing. London: Edward Arnold, 1977.

Lotman, Jurij. Analysis of the Poetic Text. Translated by D. Barton Johnson. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1976.

----- Structure of the Artistic Text. Translated by Ronald Vroon. Ann Arbor: Department of Slavic Language, University of Michigan, 1977.

Luk, Charles. Ch'an and Zen Teaching. London: Rider, 1962.

Malcuzyński, M. -Pierrette. "Polyphonic Theory and Contemporary Literary Practices." Studies in Twentieth Century Literature 9 (1984): 75-87.

Malmgren, Carl D. Fictional Space in the Modernist and Postmodernist American Novel. Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1985.

----- "'From Work to Text': The Modernist and Postmodernist Künstlerroman." Novel 21 (1987): 5-28.

Marie-Laure, Ryan. "The Modal Structure of Narrative Universes." Poetics Today 6 (1985): 717-55.

----- "Stacks, Frames and Boundaries, or Narrative as Computer Language." Poetics Today 11 (1990): 873-99.

Marta, Jan. "John Barth's Portrait of the Artist as a Fiction: Modernism through the Looking-glass." Canadian Review of Comparative Literature 9 (1982): 209-222.

McCaffery, Larry. The Metafictional Muse. Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982.

McHale, Brian. Postmodernist Fiction. New York and London: Methuen, 1987.

Mehl, Dieter. "Form and Function of the Play within the Play." Renaissance Drama 8 (1965): 41-61.

Meltzer, Françoise. "Editor's Introduction: Partitive Plays, Pipe Dreams." Critical Inquiry 13 (1987): 215-221.

Meyer, B., and G. E. Rice. "The Interaction of Reader Strategies and the Organization of Texts." Text 2 (1982): 155-192.

Miller, J. Hillis. The Disappearance of God. New York: Schocken, 1965.

----- Fiction and Repetition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Morrell, David. John Barth: An Introduction. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976.

Newman, Charles. The Postmodern Aura: The Act of Fiction in an Age of Inflation. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1985.

Newman, Robert D. "D. M. Thomas's The White Hotel: Mirrors, Triangles, and Sublime Repression." Modern Fiction Studies 35 (1989): 193-209.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. On the Genealogy of Morals. Translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson. New York: Harp & Row, 1962.

----- The Will to Power. The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche XV. Translated by O. Levy. London: J. N. Foulès, 1909-13.

Norris, Christopher. Deconstruction and the Interest of Theory. London: Pinter, 1988.

O'Donnell, Patrick. Passionate Doubts: Designs of Interpretation in Contemporary American Fiction. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986.

Pavel, Thomas G. Fictional Worlds. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986.

----- The Feud of Language. Translated by Linda Jordan and Thomas G. Pavel. Cambridge, Mass: Basil Blackwell, 1989.

Potter, Joy Hambuechen. Five Frames for the Decameron. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Pratt, Annis, and L. S. Dembo, ed. Doris Lessing: Critical Studies. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974.

Pratt, Mary Louise. Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse. Bloomington, Ind., 1977.

Price, Martin. Form of Life: Character and Moral Imagination in the Novel. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.

Prince, Gerald. A Dictionary of Narratology. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987.

Pynchon, Thomas. V. New York: Bantam, 1963.

Quine, J. H. The Way of Paradox and Other Essays. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976.

Radford, F. L. "The Great Mother and the Boy: Jung, Davies, and Fifth Business." In Studies in Robertson Davies's Deptford Trilogy. Edited by Robert G. Lawrence and Samuel L. Macey. Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 1980.

----- and R. R. Wilson. "Some Phrases of the Jungian Moon: Jung's Influence on Modern Literature." English Studies in Canada 8 (1982): 311-332.

Ragland-Sullivan, Ellie. Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

Ricardou, Jean. "Temps de la narration, temps de la fiction." Translated by Joseph Kestner. In James Joyce Quarterly 16 (Fall 1978/Winter 1979): 11-16.

Ricoeur, Paul. The Rule of Metaphor: An Interdisciplinary Study of the Creation of Meaning in Language. Translated by Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977.

----- "The Narrative Function." In Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation. Translated by John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

----- Time and Narrative. Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Riffaterre, Michael. Text Production. Translated by Terese Lyons. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.

----- Semiotics of Poetry. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978.

Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics. London: Methuen, 1983.

----- "Paradoxical Status of Repetition." Poetics Today 1 (1980): 151-59.

Robbe-Grillet, Alain. For a New Novel. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Grove Press, 1965.

Robertson, Mary F. "Hystery, Herstory, History: 'Imagining the Real' in Thomas's The White Hotel." Contemporary Literature 25 (1984): 452-477.

Rorty, Richard. Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Rubens, Robert. "Footnote to The Golden Notebook." The Queen August 21, 1962: 32.

Rubenstein, Roberta. "The Fiction of Doris Lessing." In Essays on the Contemporary British Novel. Edited by Hedwig Bock and Alberta Wertheim. Munchen: Max Hueber Verlag, 1986.

Rushdie, Salman. Midnight's Children. London: Picador, 1982.

Russell, Charles. "The Context of the Concept." In Romanticism, Modernism, Postmodernism. Edited by Harry R. Garvin. Lewisburg, Pa: Bucknell University Press; London: Associated University Press, 1980.

----- ed. The Avant-Garde Today: An International Anthology. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981.

Ruthrof, Horst. The Reader's Construction of Narrative. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.

Said, Edward W. Beginnings. New York: Basic Books, 1975.

----- The World, the Text, and the Critic. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Sauerberg, Lars Ole. "When the Soul Takes Wing: D. M. Thomas's The White Hotel." Critique 31 (1989): 3-10.

Schweichart, Patrocínio P. "Reading a Wordless Statement: The Structure of Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook." Modern Fiction Studies 31 (1985): 263-79.

Scholes, Robert. Fabulation and Metafiction. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979.

Schulz, Max F. The Muses of John Barth. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.

----- "The Thalian Design of Barth's Lost in the Funhouse." Contemporary Literature 25 (1984): 397-410.

Siegle, Robert. The Politics of Reflexivity: Narrative and the Constitutive Poetics of Culture. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Siegelman, Ellen Y. "The White Hotel: Visions and Revisions of the Psyche." Literature and Psychology 33 (1987): 69-76.

Simonsuuri, Kirsti. Homer's Original Genius. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Spencer, Donald P. Narrative Truth and Historical Truth: Meaning and Interpretation in Psychoanalysis. New York: Norton, 1982.

Sprague, Claire and Virginia Tiger eds. Critical Essays on Doris Lessing. Boston: Hall, 1986.

Stanzel, Franz. Narrative Situations in the Novel. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971.

Stark, John. The Literature of Exhaustion: Borges, Nabokov, Barth. Durham: Duke University Press, 1974.

Steiner, George. Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature and the Inhuman. New York: Athenaeum, 1967.

----- "Text and Context." In On Difficulty. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Sternberg, Mier. Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978.

Stevick, Philip. Alternative Pleasure: Postrealist Fiction and the Tradition. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981.

Stout, Jeffrey. "What Is the Meaning of a Text?" New Literary History 14 (1982): 1-12.

Stovel, Nora Foster. "Reflections on Mirror Images: Doubles and Identity in the Novels of Margaret Atwood." Essays on Canadian Writing 33 (1986): 50-67.

----- "D. H. Lawrence, From Playwright to Novelist: 'Strife in Love' in A Collier's Friday and Sons and Lovers." English Studies in Canada 13 (1987): 451-467.

----- "'A Feminine Ending?': Symbolism as Closure in the Novel's of Margaret Drabble." English Studies in Canada 15 (1989): 80-93.

----- Margaret Drabble: Symbolic Moralist. Washington: Starmont Press, 1989.

----- Introducing Margaret Laurence's The Fire-Dwellers. Toronto: ECW Press, 1991.

Sucknick, Lynn. "Feeling and Reason in Doris Lessing's Fiction." Contemporary Literature 14 (1973): 515-535.

Sullivan, Walter. "Terrors Old and New: Bellow's Rumania and Three Views of the Holocaust." Sewanee Review 90 (1982): 484-492.

Sutton, Walter. "The Literary Images and the Reader: A Consideration of the Theory of Spatial Form." Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 16 (1957): 112-23.

Suzuki, D. T. Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist. New York: Macmillan, 1969.

Tanner, Tony. City of Words. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

Tharpe, Jac. John Barth: the Comic Sublimity of Paradox. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1974.

Thiher, Allen. Words in Reflection. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Thomas, D. M. The White Hotel. London: Victor Gollancz, 1981.

----- "Letter to the Editor." Times Literary Supplement 2 April 1992: 383.

Todorov, Tzvetan. The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre. Translated by Richard Howard. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1975.

----- The Poetics of Prose. Translated by Richard Howard. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.

Valdes, Mario J. Phenomenological Hermeneutics and the Study of Literature. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987.

Van Dijk, Teun A. Text and Context. London and New York: Longman, 1977.

Vickers, Brian. Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance. New York: Cambridge University Press: 1984.

Vickery, John B. Myths and Texts. Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1983.

Vintanza, Victor J. "The Novelist as Topologist: John Barth's Lost in the Funhouse." Texas Studies in Language and Literature 19 (1977): 83-97.

Waldmeir, Joseph J. ed. Critical Essays on John Barth. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1980.

Waugh, Patricia. Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction. London: Methuen, 1984.

Wilde, Alan. "Irony in the Postmodern Age: Toward a Map of Suspensiveness." Boundary 2 (1980): 5-47.

Wilson, R. Rawdon. "Narrative Allusiveness: the Interplay of Stories in Two Renaissance Writers, Spenser and Cervantes." English Studies in Canada 12 (1986): 138-162.

----- "Narrative Reflexivity in Shakespeare." Poetics Today 10 (1989): 770-791.

----- In Palamedes' Shadow: Explorations in Play, Game, and Narrative Theory. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990.

----- "National Frontiers and International Movements: Postmodernism in Canadian Literature." In Ambivalence: Studies in Canadian Literature. Edited by Om P. Juneja and Chandra Mohan. New Delhi: Applied Publishers Limited, 1990.

----- "The Space of the Untold: Conrad's Allusiveness," Victorian Review 16 (1990): 22-47.

White, Hayden. Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.

----- Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

Whitehead, A. N. Science and the Modern World. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1953.

Woolley, Deborah A. "Empty 'Text,' Fecund Voice: Self-Reflexivity in Barth's Lost in the Funhouse." Contemporary Literature 26 (1985): 460-81.

Wymer, Rowland. "Freud, Jung and the 'Myth' of Psychoanalysis in The White Hotel." Mosaic 22 (1989): 55-69.

Yeh, Michelle. "The Deconstructive Way: A Comparative Study of Derrida and Chuang Tzu." Journal of Chinese Philosophy 10 (1983): 95-126.

Young, Robert. Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981.

Young, Steven C. The Frame Structure in Tudor and Stuart Drama. Salzburg, Austria: Institut Fur Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universitat Salzburg, 1974.

Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud. The Mythopoetic Reality. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976.

Zhuang, Zi. "Zhuang Zi Yinde." In Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series 5 (2).

Ziegler, Heide. John Barth. London and New York: Methuen, 1987.

University of Alberta Library



0 1620 0129 4105

B46225